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SAMUEL JOHNSON: WRITER



# SAMUEL JOHNSON: WRITER

*A Selection edited, with an Introduction,*

BY

S. C. ROBERTS

HERBERT JENKINS LIMITED  
3 YORK STREET ST. JAMES'S  
LONDON S.W.1 ☿ ☿ MCMXXVI



## PREFACE

**I**T is not difficult to imagine the derisive answer which Johnson would have returned to a suggestion that a man should read the whole of his collected works.

Fortified by this conjecture, I have made this attempt to tear the heart out of Johnson the writer with a good conscience. Much indeed is omitted, but I take leave to hope that enough has been included to show that Johnson may give pleasure, in his own pages, as well as in Boswell's, to the modern reader.

S. C. R.

2 *July*, 1926.





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Except where otherwise noted, the text is that of *The Works of Samuel Johnson* (Oxford, 1825), a few obvious misprints being corrected.

# SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

## INTRODUCTION

### I

**S**AMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784) was born and bred amongst books. His father, Michael Johnson, was a bookseller at Lichfield, and in the two years between the end of his schooling and his entrance at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1728, Samuel was engaged in his father's trade. But though in later years he claimed to have been "bred a bookseller," the books themselves appear to have distracted him from commerce—"to supersede the pleasures of reading by the attentions of traffic was a task he never could master."

"The two years [writes Boswell] which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness,

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and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples ; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years, he told me, was not works of mere amusement, ' not voyages and travels, but all literature, sir, all ancient writers, all manly.' "

Of Johnson's own writings the earliest recorded specimen is an epitaph upon an unfortunate duck :

Here lies good master duck  
That Samuel Johnson trod on ;  
If it had liv'd, it had been *good luck*,  
For then we'd had an *odd one*.

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Of this poem there are several variants, and Boswell maintains that it was in fact written by Johnson's father; Mrs. Piozzi, on the other hand, quotes it as a striking "example of early expansion of mind."

At Oxford Johnson was too poor and too unhealthy to achieve distinction. At his first interview with his tutor he broke into the conversation with a quotation from Macrobius, and afterwards openly expressed his contempt for this same tutor's lectures. It was as an Oxford vacation exercise, however, that Johnson's first published work was written—a Latin version of Pope's *Messiah* which won high praise from the author of the original poem.

Johnson came down from Oxford after a little more than a year's residence, and his father died in 1731. With about twenty pounds to his credit Johnson had to face the world and make a living. In 1732 we find him lodging at the house of Thomas Warren, the Birmingham bookseller. Here he compiled a translation of Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* published in 1735. It was at Birmingham, too, that Johnson met Mrs. Porter, the widow of a mercer whom he afterwards married.

Encouraged by his wife's possession of a fortune of about £800, Johnson established an



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academy at Edial, near Lichfield, with a view to teaching young gentlemen the Latin and Greek languages. Not many young gentlemen came, and the school was shortly abandoned; Johnson turned, as all literary adventurers turn, to London.

### II

Johnson came to London in 1737 with a half-written tragedy and, as he said in later years, with twopence-halfpenny in his pocket. With him came David Garrick, at that time destined for the law.

Johnson had a letter of introduction to Mr. Colson, a mathematical schoolmaster, but otherwise he was virtually alone in the metropolis, and "how he employed himself upon his first coming to London is not particularly known." What is known, however, is that Johnson made application to Edward Cave, the editor of the newly-founded *Gentleman's Magazine*, and that in a short time he became a regular contributor to that journal. Thus, in the course of the year 1738 he wrote many odes and epigrams—in Greek, Latin and English—and for some years he was responsible for the accounts of Parliamentary debates. These accounts were a very popular feature of the *Gentleman's Magazine*,

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and when the Speaker prohibited them, Cave simply made a pretence of disguising the orators' names (*Walelop* for *Walpole*, and such like) and gave his readers accounts of "Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputia." Johnson raised his imagination to "such a pitch of fervour as bordered upon enthusiasm," and took care that "the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it."

Meanwhile there had appeared the first work which brought Johnson into real literary prominence. This was his poem *London*, of which Robert Dodsley, the bookseller, "had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit." It was written in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal and was an immediate success: "The first buz of the literary circles was 'here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope.'" The whole poem breathes a spirit of fervent nationalism:

We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth;  
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew,  
And call Britannia's glories back to view;  
Behold her cross triumphant on the main,  
The guard of commerce, and the dread of  
Spain,  
Ere masquerades debauched, excise oppress'd,  
Or English honour grew a standing jest,

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and occasionally there is a bitter personal note :

This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,  
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY  
DEPRESS'D.

*London* brought Johnson fame, but not a fortune, and he continued to "write for bread." Reviews, prefaces, biographies, essays, and catalogues filled his working hours. At one time he thought of becoming a school-master, at another of entering the law ; but the lack of a university degree debarred him from a learned profession and Grub Street claimed him for its own. Johnson, however, was too fine a scholar to be content with journalism, and he shortly began upon a task which would have daunted a less courageous pioneer. This was the compilation of a Dictionary of the English Language, and even Johnson was a little terrified at his own temerity :

"When I survey the Plan which I have laid before you, I cannot, my lord, but confess, that I am frighted at its extent, and, like the soldiers of *Cæsar*, look on *Britain* as a new world, which it is almost madness to invade. But I hope, that though I should not complete the conquest, I shall at least discover

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the coast, civilise part of the inhabitants, and make it easy for some other adventurer to proceed farther, to reduce them wholly to subjection and settle them under laws."

That a syndicate of booksellers, led by the brothers Dodsley, should have recognised Johnson as the man fitted for this gigantic task is in itself evidence of the position in which Johnson had established himself after less than ten years' work in London. About the year 1749 Johnson moved into a fine house in Gough Square, happily still preserved, and here the top floor was converted into a lexicographer's workshop:

"He had an upper room [writes Boswell] fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations."

Johnson employed six assistants for the work, and "let it be remembered [says Boswell] by the natives of North Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five were of that country."

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### III

Meanwhile Johnson had his daily bread to earn, and inclination, as well as necessity, made him turn to other forms of literary work—"his enlarged and lively mind could not be satisfied without more diversity of employment and the pleasure of animated relaxation."

Among these diversities of employment was the writing of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), a poem of which Sir Walter Scott declared that "its deep and pathetic morality has often extracted tears from those whose eyes wander dry over pages professedly sentimental."

While Johnson was thus laboriously mounting the slopes of literary fame, David Garrick, his friend and former pupil, had sprung, almost with a single bound, into theatrical prominence. In 1747 he became manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and Johnson wrote the Prologue for the opening night. Two years later Johnson's own tragedy *Irene* was put upon the stage. The play had been inspired by a reading of Knolles's *History of the Turks*, and its heroine was the beautiful Greek captive for whose sake Mahomet the Great neglected his empire for two years. The principal parts were played by Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber, Barry, and Garrick himself, and,

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thanks to Garrick's efforts, the play ran for nine nights. On the whole Johnson may be reckoned as lucky to have earned his "three nights' profits" (nearly £200) as well as £100 from Dodsley for publication rights. Unmoved as the Monument by his failure as a playwright, Johnson enjoyed the "sprightly chit-chat" of the Green Room. He appeared at the theatre in unusually splendid clothes—scarlet waistcoat and gold-laced hat—and became a little apprehensive of the effect of a theatrical atmosphere upon his moral stability. "I'll come no more behind your scenes, David," he said, "for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

Johnson's next enterprise was of a more sober kind. The first number of *The Rambler* appeared on March 20, 1750, and for two years Johnson "answered the stated call of the press twice a week." Edward Cave, the publisher, received many congratulations upon the high qualities of *The Rambler* and Richardson, the novelist, was enthusiastic in his praise. The public, however, showed no wide appreciation of the papers at the time of their first publication.

*The Adventurer*, founded by Johnson's friend, Hawkesworth, in 1752, was credited with the "same pure and exalted morality"

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as that which characterised *The Rambler* and Johnson contributed twenty-nine papers to it upon a variety of subjects.

In the year 1754 Johnson was hard at work upon the Dictionary, and in the following year the great book was published. Now superseded, Johnson's Dictionary is in danger of being regarded by modern readers as a repository of antique or prejudiced definition ; but even the hastiest comparison between Johnson's work and that of his immediate predecessor, Nathaniel Bailey, will show the nature of the advance made in English lexicography as a result of Johnson's pioneer work. Lord Chesterfield attempted to make amends for his earlier neglect of Johnson by writing two papers in *The World* in praise of the Dictionary and declaring Johnson to be the Dictator of the English language. Johnson's reply is one of the best known of his written works.<sup>1</sup>

But, although the nature and extent of Johnson's achievement were widely recognised, the Great Lexicographer was still compelled to do hack-work for editors and booksellers. Thus in the years immediately following that of the publication of the Dictionary he wrote prefaces for such varied works as Browne's *Christian Morals*, Rolt's *Dictionary of Trade*

<sup>1</sup> See page 228.

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and Payne's *Game of Draughts*, besides reviewing a miscellany of books for *The Literary Magazine*. It was at this time, too, that he issued the *Proposals* for his edition of Shakespeare.

The first *Idler* appeared in *The Universal Chronicle* for April 15, 1758, and Johnson contributed his weekly paper for nearly two years. These essays, deliberately written in a lighter manner than that of the *Rambler*, provide some of the most entertaining pieces of Johnson's occasional prose and show him not only as an observer, but as a humorous observer, of human life.

In 1759 there appeared the saddest of all Johnson's writings. Johnson's mother died early in that year<sup>1</sup> and he was in need of money for the expenses of the funeral. According to Boswell, Johnson wrote the story of *Rasselas* in the evenings of a single week in order to meet these expenses and received £100 for the first edition. The title originally chosen by the author was "The Choice of Life" and the keynote of the story is struck in the famous opening paragraph :

Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age

<sup>1</sup> See letter on p 232.



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will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow—attend to the history of *Rasselas*, prince of Abyssinia.

Though Boswell may be right in interpreting Johnson's chief motive as the direction of the hopes of man to things eternal, it was probably the romantic setting of the tale which won for *Rasselas* a popularity which no other work of his had attained. It was quickly reprinted and was afterwards translated into nearly every European language.

In 1762 Johnson at length received a material reward for his services to the English language, George III conferring upon him a pension of £300 a year. Johnson was staggered. The English language, he said, did not afford him terms adequate to his feelings.

The year 1762 was the turning-point in Johnson's career. Before that date his life, as Arthur Murphy says, was a perpetual struggle with difficulties. After it, "halcyon days are now to open upon him." He had no longer to look for his daily bread to the booksellers, but the booksellers still looked to him for "copy." In particular, they looked for the edition of Shakespeare which had been promised for the Christmas of 1757. Year

## INTRODUCTION

after year passed and satirists did not shrink from criticism :

He for *subscribers* baits his hook  
And takes their cash—but where's the  
book ?

The edition finally appeared in 1765.

Of Johnson's remaining works the two most important are *A Journey to the Western Islands* and *The Lives of the Poets*. The first was written quickly while the impressions of travel were still clear in his mind and was published in 1775 ; the second was a series of prefaces written for a collection of English poets published by a large syndicate of booksellers between 1779 and 1781. Johnson was characteristically outspoken in his treatment of poets whom he did not like and his criticism of Milton, Gray and others provoked some violent counterblasts ; but the *Lives* remain one of the best introductions to the study of English poetry.

In spite of Johnson's freedom from the necessity of writing for a living his pen was always ready to help a friend or to plunge into controversy. He helped Bishop Percy in the Dedication of his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* ; he contributed *The Fountains* (a prose fairy-tale) to the *Miscellanies* published for the benefit of Miss Anna Williams ;

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he wrote a prologue for *The Good-Natur'd Man* and also for Hugh Kelly's *A Word to the Wise*; he compiled the greater part of the petitions of the unfortunate Dr. Dodd. In the world of political controversy such questions as those of the Middlesex Election and the American Colonies provoked him to write several vigorous pamphlets.<sup>1</sup>

But all these were written to meet a particular occasion. Johnson was, or believed himself to be, *emeritus* :

JOHNSON : As we advance in the journey of life, we drop some of the things which have pleased us; whether it be that we are fatigued and don't choose to carry so many things any farther, or that we find other things which we like better.

BOSWELL : But, Sir, why don't you give us something in some other way?

GOLDSMITH : Ay, Sir, we have a claim upon you.

JOHNSON : No, Sir, I am not obliged to do any more. No man is obliged to do as much as he can do. A man is to have part of his life to himself. If a soldier has fought a good many campaigns, he is not to be blamed if he retires to ease and tranquillity.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 199 ff.

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A physician, who has practised long in a great city, may be excused if he retires to a small town, and takes less practice. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation, bears the same proportion to the good I can do by my writings, that the practice of a physician, retired to a small town, does to his practice in a great city.

BOSWELL : But I wonder, Sir, you have not more pleasure in writing than in not writing.

JOHNSON : Sir, you *may* wonder.

## V

Such, in brief outline, was the career of Samuel Johnson as a man of letters ; and even a bare recital of his literary achievements may serve to show the stages by which his fame was established. Furthermore, it is necessary to insist that it was upon Johnson's writings, and not upon his talk, that the structure of this fame was primarily built.

The title-page of Boswell's *Life* itself suggests this, in its claim to comprehend "an account of his studies and numerous works, in chronological order ; a series of his epistolary correspondence and conversations with many eminent persons." Author, letter-writer, talker—this is the order of importance

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in which Boswell contemplated the qualities and achievements of his hero. In his own generation, Boswell aimed at Johnsonising the land and, with the sure touch of the conscious artist, he accomplished his aim. But later generations have been so completely Boswellised, that they have almost forgotten what were the qualities which first inspired Boswell to devote his powers of observation and description to the record of Johnson's life.

For Johnson was a famous poet while Boswell was still in the nursery; he was hailed as a literary dictator while Boswell was still a schoolboy; he had passed from the toil of Grub Street to the halcyon days of leisure before ever Boswell met him. This established fame of Johnson was, indeed, the compelling motive which led James Boswell, the greatest celebrity-hunter in history, into Tom Davies's back-parlour in 1763. Then, as always, Johnson was to Boswell the Sage, the Philosopher, the Rambler, the Literary Preceptour; and the fact that Boswell's readers think of Johnson as the Great Talker in the Tavern Chair rather than as the Great Cham of Literature is due primarily to Boswell's unique skill as a recorder of conversational intercourse. By the common tag, "Everybody reads Boswell, nobody reads Johnson" Boswell

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would undoubtedly have been flattered ; but he would also have been horrified.

Growing up amongst books, Johnson turned first to books for knowledge. Endowed with a tenacious memory and with all the instincts of the scholar, he naturally turned towards a literary way of life. But while he was by nature a voracious reader, Johnson was a writer only by compulsion of circumstances. In his own view, indeed, no one ever became a writer for any other reason ; certainly Johnson's literary output would have been small had he been a country gentleman or a college don. But once driven to the profession of letters, Johnson applied his enlarged and lively mind not only to the heavier tasks of scholarship, but also to the study of what he called the "great book of mankind." Inevitably, the greater part of his writing is coloured by eighteenth-century didacticism. With his pen in his hand Johnson was more keenly conscious of his duty as a moralist than when he sat, and talked, upon "the throne of human felicity." Though he set himself a high standard of truthfulness in conversation, he talked nevertheless for victory and by his talk, with Boswell's help, he has conquered the modern world.

But those who, like Mrs. Thrale and Miss Burney, were introduced to his talk after

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being for years familiar with his writing, were quick to note the close resemblance of the one to the other ; and it is impossible to divide Johnson's personality, as one may divide his career, into separate halves.

Writer and talker, Samuel Johnson is one and indivisible.

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## THE POET

**I**T was as a poet that Johnson first attained to literary fame. *London* was published in 1738, and Mr. Pope, a competent judge, declared : "The author, whoever he is, will not be long concealed." But of the two satires written in imitation of Juvenal, *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is incomparably the finer. Alike in its expression of intensely personal feeling and in its majestic survey of the fate of the world's great men, it has a dignity and a sincerity which make it one of the best poems in the language for re-reading.

The Prologue written for the opening of Drury Lane Theatre has a similar dignity. Both the historical review of English stage and the inevitable moralising are admirably terse, and justify Byron's description of the poem as the best prologue in the language.



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Of *Irene* Leslie Stephen wrote that it was a "curious example of the result of bestowing great powers upon a totally uncongenial task." In the scene quoted here the speech of Demetrius beginning "To-morrow's action!" is one of the few passages in which Johnson's enlarged and lively mind begins to triumph over metrical convention.

The *Ode on the Death of Robert Levet* needs no comment. It was Johnson's last tribute to the "odd old surgeon" who was his friend, and the lines come straight from Johnson's heart.

The remaining pieces are impromptus drawn from the pages of Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins, and illustrate Johnson's lack of sympathy with the revival of ballad literature. Speaking of the alleged "beautiful simplicity" of Percy's *Reliques*, Johnson contended that "what was called simplicity was, in truth, inanity."

## THE POET

### THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES ;

IN IMITATION OF  
THE TENTH SATIRE OF JUVENAL.

LET observation, with extensive view,  
Survey mankind, from China to Peru ;  
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,  
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life ;  
Then say, how hope and fear, desire and hate  
O'erspread with snares the elouded maze of  
fate ;  
Where wav'ring man, betray'd by vent'rous  
pride  
To tread the dreary paths, without a guide,  
As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,  
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good ;  
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,  
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant  
voice ;  
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,  
When vengeance listens to the fool's request.  
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,  
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art ;  
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,

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With fatal sweetness eloquent flows,  
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'ful  
breath,

And restless fire precipitates on death.

But, scarce observ'd, the knowing and the  
bold

Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold ;  
Wide wasting pest ! that rages unconfin'd,  
And crowds with crimes the records of man-  
kind ;

For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,  
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws ;  
Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety  
buys,

The dangers gather as the treasures rise.

Let hist'ry tell where rival kings command,  
And dubious title shakes the madd'ed land,  
When statutes glean the refuse of the sword,  
How much more safe the vassal than the lord ;  
Low sculks the hind beneath the rage of power,  
And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tower,  
Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound,  
Though confiscation's vultures hover round.

The needy traveller, serene and gay,  
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil  
away.

Does envy seize thee ? crush th' upbraiding  
joy ;

Increase his riches, and his peace destroy ;  
Now fears, in dire vicissitude, invade,

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The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring  
shade ;

Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,  
One shows the plunder, and one hides the  
thief.

Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails,  
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales :  
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,  
Th' insidious rival, and the gaping heir.

Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,  
With cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth,  
See motley life in modern trappings dress'd,  
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest :  
Thou, who could'st laugh where want en-  
chain'd caprice,

Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece ;  
Where wealth, unlov'd, without a mourner  
died ;

And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride ;  
Where ne'er was known the form of mock  
debate,

Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state ;  
Where change of fav'rites made no change of  
laws,

And senates heard, before they judg'd a cause ;  
How would'st thou shake at Britain's modish  
tribe,

Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing  
gibe ?

Attentive truth and nature to descry,

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And pierce each scene with philosophick eye ;  
To thee were solemn toys, or empty show,  
The robes of pleasure, and the veils of woe :  
All aid the faree, and all thy mirth maintain,  
Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are  
vain.

Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's  
mind,  
Renew'd at ev'ry glance on human kind ;  
How just that scorn, ere yet thy voice declare,  
Search ev'ry state, and canvass ev'ry pray'r.

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd preferment's  
gate,  
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great ;  
Delusive fortune hears th' incessant call,  
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.  
On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,  
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their  
end.

Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's  
door

Pours in the morning worshipper no more ;  
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,  
To growing wealth the dedicator flies ;  
From ev'ry room descends the painted face,  
That hung the bright palladium of the place ;  
And, smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,  
To better features yields the frame of gold ;  
For now no more we trace in ev'ry line  
Heroick worth, benevolence divine :

## THE POET

The form, distorted, justifies the fall,  
And detestation rids th' indignant wall.

But will not Britain hear the last appeal,  
Sign her foes' doom, or guard her fav'rites'  
zeal ?

Through freedom's sons no more remonstrance  
rings,

Degrading nobles and controlling kings ;  
Our supple tribes repress their patriot throats,  
And ask no questions but the price of votes ;  
With weekly libels and septennial ale,  
Their wish is full to riot and to rail.

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,  
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand ;  
To him the church, the realm their pow'rs  
consign,

Through him the rays of regal bounty shine ;  
Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,  
His smile alone security bestows.

Still to new heights his restless wishes tow'r,  
Claim leads to claim, and pow'r advances  
pow'r ;

Till conquest, unresisted, ceas'd to please,  
And rights, submitted, left him none to seize.  
At length his sov'reign frowns—the train of  
state

Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to  
hate.

Where'er he turns, he meets a stranger's eye,  
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly ;

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Now drops, at once, the pride of awful state,  
The golden canopy, the glitt'ring plate,  
The regal palace, the luxurious board,  
The liv'ried army, and the menial lord.  
With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,  
He seeks the refuge of monastick rest :  
Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,  
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.

Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace  
repine,  
Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end, be  
thine ?

Or liv'st thou now, with safer pride content,  
The wisest justice on the banks of Trent ?  
For, why did Wolsey, near the steeps of fate,  
On weak foundations raise th' enormous  
weight ?

Why but to sink beneath misfortune's blow,  
With louder ruin to the gulfs below ?

What gave great Villiers to th' assassin's  
knife,  
And fix'd disease on Harley's closing life ?  
What murder'd Wentworth, and what exil'd  
Hyde,

By kings protected, and to kings allied ?  
What but their wish indulg'd in courts to  
shine,

And pow'r too great to keep, or to resign ?

When first the college rolls receive his name,  
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame ;

## THE POET

Through all his veins the fever of renown  
Spreads from the strong contagion of the gown ;  
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,  
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.  
Are these thy views ? Proceed, illustrious  
youth,

And virtue guard thee to the throne of truth !  
Yet, should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat  
Till captive science yields her last retreat ;  
Should reason guide thee with her brightest  
ray,

And pour on misty doubt resistless day ;  
Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,  
Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright ;  
Should tempting novelty thy eell refrain,  
And sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain ;  
Should beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,  
Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd heart ;  
Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,  
Nor melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade ;  
Yet hope not life, from grief or danger free,  
Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee :  
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,  
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise ;  
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the gaol.  
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,  
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.  
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,  
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Nor deem, when learning her last prize  
bestows,  
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from woes ;  
See, when the vulgar scape, despis'd or aw'd,  
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.  
From meaner minds though smaller fines  
content,  
The plunder'd palace, or sequester'd rent ;  
Mark'd out by dang'rous parts, he meets the  
shock,  
And fatal learning leads him to the block :  
Around his tomb let art and genius weep,  
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and  
sleep.  
The festal blazes, the triumphal show,  
The ravish'd standard, and the captive foe,  
The senate's thanks, the gazette's pompous tale,  
With force resistless o'er the brave prevail.  
Such bribes the rapid Greek o'er Asia whirl'd ;  
For such the steady Romans shook the world ;  
For such, in distant lands, the Britons shine,  
And stain with blood the Danube or the  
Rhine ;  
This pow'r has praise, that virtue scarce can  
warm,  
Till fame supplies the universal charm.  
Yet reason frowns on war's unequal game,  
Where wasted nations raise a single name ;  
And mortgag'd states, their grandsires' wreaths  
regret,

## THE POET

From age to age in everlasting debt ;  
Wreaths which, at last, the dear-bought right  
convey

To rust on medals, or on stones decay.

On what foundation stands the warrior's  
pride,

How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide ;  
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,  
No dangers fright him, and no labours tire ;  
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,  
Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain ;  
No joys to him pacifick sceptres yield,  
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field ;  
Behold surrounding kings their pow'rs combine,

And one capitulate, and one resign ;  
Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms  
in vain ;

"Think nothing gain'd," he cries, "till nought  
remain,

On Moscow's walls till Gothick standards fly,  
And all be mine beneath the polar sky."

The march begins in military state,  
And nations on his eye suspended wait ;  
Stern famine guards the solitary coast,  
And winter barricades the realm of frost ;  
He comes, nor want nor cold his course  
delay ;—

Hide, blushing glory, hide Pultowa's day :  
The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

And shows his miseries in distant lands ;  
Condemn'd a needy supplicant to wait,  
While ladies interpose, and slaves debate.  
But did not chance, at length, her error  
mend ?

Did no subverted empire mark his end ?  
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound ?  
Or hostile millions press him to the ground ?  
His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,  
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand ;  
He left the name, at which the world grew  
pale,

To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

All times their scenes of pompous woes  
afford,  
From Persia's tyrant to Bavaria's lord.  
In gay hostility and barb'rous pride,  
With half mankind embattl'd at his side,  
Great Xerxes comes to seize the certain prey,  
And starves exhausted regions in his way ;  
Attendant flatt'ry counts his myriads o'er,  
Till counted myriads sooth his pride no more ;  
Fresh praise is try'd till madness fires his  
mind,

The waves he lashes, and enchains the wind,  
New pow'rs are claim'd, new pow'rs are still  
bestow'd,

Till rude resistance lops the spreading god ;  
The daring Greeks deride the martial show,  
And heap their valleys with the gaudy foe ;

## THE POET

Th' insulted sea, with humbler thoughts, he  
gains ;

A single skiff to speed his flight remains ;

Th' incumber'd oar scarce leaves the dreaded  
coast

Through purple billows and a floating host.

The bold Bavarian, in a luckless hour,  
Tries the dread summits of Cæsarean pow'r,  
With unexpected legions bursts away,  
And sees defenceless realms receive his sway ;—  
Short sway ! fair Austria spreads her mournful  
charms,

The queen, the beauty, sets the world in arms ;  
From hill to hill the beacon's rousing blaze  
Spreads wide the hope of plunder and of  
praise ;

The fierce Croatian, and the wild Hussar,  
With all the sons of ravage, crowd the war ;  
The baffled prince, in honour's flatt'ring bloom  
Of hasty greatness, finds the fatal doom,  
His foes' decision, and his subjects' blame,  
And steals to death from anguish and from  
shame.

Enlarge my life with multitude of days !  
In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant  
prays ;

Hides from himself his state, and shuns to  
know,

That life protracted is protracted woe.

Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

And shuts up all the passages of joy ;  
In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,  
The fruit autumnal. and the vernal flow'r ;  
With listless eyes the dotard views the store,  
He views, and wonders that they please no  
more ;

Now pall the tasteless meats, and joyless wines,  
And luxury with sighs her slave resigns.  
Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing  
strain,

Diffuse the tuneful lenitives of pain :  
No sounds, alas ! would touch th' impervious  
ear,

Though dancing mountains witness'd Orpheus  
near ;

Nor lute nor lyre his feeble pow'rs attend,  
Nor sweeter musick of a virtuous friend ;  
But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,  
Perversely grave, or positively wrong.  
The still returning tale, and ling'ring jest,  
Perplex the fawning niece and pamper'd guest,  
While growing hopes scarce awe the gath'ring  
sneer,

And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear ;  
The watchful guests still hint the last offence ;  
The daughter's petulance, the son's expense,  
Improve his heady rage with treach'rous skill,  
And mould his passions till they make his  
will.

Unnumber'd maladies his joints invade,

## THE POET

Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade ;  
But unextinguish'd av'rice still remains,  
And dreaded losses aggravate his pains ;  
He turns, with anxious heart and crippled  
hands,

His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands ;  
Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,  
Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.

But grant, the virtues of a temp'rate prime  
Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime ;  
An age that melts with unperceiv'd decay,  
And glides in modest innocence away ;  
Whose peaceful day benevolence endears,  
Whose night congratulating conscience cheers ;  
The gen'ral fav'rite as the gen'ral friend ;  
Such age there is, and who shall wish its end ?

Yet e'en on this her load misfortune flings,  
To press the weary minutes' flagging wings ;  
New sorrow rises as the day returns,  
A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.  
Now kindred merit fills the sable bier,  
Now lacerated friendship claims a tear ;  
Year chases year, decay pursues decay,  
Still drops some joy from with'ring life away ;  
New forms arise, and diff'rent views engage,  
Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage,  
Till pitying nature signs the last release,  
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.

But few there are whom hours like these  
await,

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Who set unelouded in the gulfs of fate.  
From Lydia's monarch should the search  
descend,

By Solon caution'd to regard his end,  
In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,  
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise !  
From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage  
flow,

And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

The teeming mother, anxious for her race,  
Begg for each birth the fortune of a face ;  
Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty  
spring ;

And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a  
king.

Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,  
Whom pleasure keeps too busy to be wise ;  
Whom joys with soft varieties invite,  
By day the frolic, and the dance by night ;  
Who frown with vanity, who smile with  
art,

And ask the latest fashion of the heart ;  
What care, what rules, your heedless charms  
shall save,

Each nymph your rival, and each youth your  
slave ?

Against your fame with fondness hate com-  
bines,

The rival batters, and the lover mines.

With distant voice neglected virtue calls,

## THE POET

Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance  
falls ;  
Tir'd with contempt, she quits the slipp'ry  
reign,  
And pride and prudence take her seat in vain.  
In crowd at once, where none the pass defend,  
The harmless freedom, and the private friend.  
The guardians yield, by force superiour ply'd  
To int'rest, prudence ; and to flatt'ry, pride.  
Here beauty falls, betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,  
And hissing infamy proclaims the rest,  
Where then shall hope and fear their  
objects find ?  
Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant  
mind ?  
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate ?  
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
No cries invoke the mercies of the skies ?  
Inquirer, cease ; petitions yet remain  
Which heav'n may hear ; nor deem religion  
vain.  
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
But leave to heav'n the measure and the choice.  
Safe in his pow'r, whose eyes discern afar  
The secret ambush of a specious pray'r ;  
Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,  
Secure, whate'er he gives, he gives the best.  
Yet, when the sense of sacred presence fires,  
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,  
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;  
For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;  
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill ;  
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,  
Counts death kind nature's signal of retreat :  
These goods for man the laws of heav'n  
ordain ;  
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to  
gain ;  
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,  
And makes the happiness she does not find.

## THE POET

### PROLOGUE,

SPOKEN BY MR. GARRICK, AT THE OPENING OF  
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY LANE, 1747.

WHEN learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous  
foes

First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespeare  
rose ;

Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,  
Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new :  
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,  
And panting time toil'd after him in vain :  
His pow'rful strokes presiding truth impress'd,  
And unresisted passion storm'd the breast.

Then Jonson came, instructed from the  
school

To please in method, and invent by rule ;  
His studious patience and laborious art,  
By regular approach, assail'd the heart :  
Cold approbation gave the ling'ring bays ;  
For those, who durst not censure, scarce could  
praise :

A mortal born, he met the gen'ral doom,  
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.

The wits of Charles found easier ways to  
fame,

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's  
flame :

Themselves they studied, as they felt, they  
writ ;

Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit ;

Vice always found a sympathetick friend ;

They pleas'd their age, and did not aim to  
mend.

Yet bards, like these, aspir'd to lasting praise,  
And proudly hop'd to pimp in future days.

Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were  
strong ;

Their slaves were willing, and their reign was  
long :

Till shame regain'd the post that sense betray'd,  
And virtue call'd oblivion to her aid.

Then, crush'd by rules, and weaken'd, as  
refin'd,

For years the pow'r of tragedy declin'd ;

From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,

Till declamation roar'd, while passion slept ;

Yet still did virtue deign the stage to tread,

Philosophy remain'd, though nature fled.

But forced, at length, her ancient reign to quit,

She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of wit ;

Exulting folly hail'd the joyful day,

And pantomime and song confirm'd her sway.

But who the coming changes can presage,

And mark the future periods of the stage ?

Perhaps, if skill could distant times explore,

## THE POET

New Behns, new Durfeys, yet remain in store ;  
Perhaps, where Lear has rav'd, and Hamlet  
dy'd,

On flying cars new sorcerers may ride :  
Perhaps, (for who can guess th' effects of  
chance ?)

Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance.

Hard is his lot that, here by fortune plac'd,  
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste ;  
With ev'ry meteor of caprice must play,  
And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.  
Ah ! let not censure term our fate our choice,  
The stage but echoes back the publick voice ;  
The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,  
For we that live to please, must please to live.

Then prompt no more the follies you decry,  
As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die ;  
'Tis yours, this night, to bid the reign commence  
Of rescued nature and reviving sense ;  
To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of  
show,

For useful mirth and salutary woe ;  
Bid scenick virtue form the rising age,  
And truth diffuse her radiance from the  
stage.

SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

*From* IRENE

SCENE II.

CALI, DEMETRIUS, LEONTIUS, ABDALLA.

DEMETRIUS.

When will occasion smile upon our wishes,  
And give the tortures of suspense a period ?  
Still must we linger in uncertain hope ?  
Still languish in our chains, and dream of  
freedom,  
Like thirsty sailors *gazing on the clouds*,  
Till burning death shoots through their  
wither'd limbs ?

CALI.

Deliverance is at hand ; for Turkey's tyrant,  
Sunk in his pleasures, confident and gay,  
With all the hero's dull security,  
Trusts to my care his mistress and his life,  
And laughs, and wantons in the jaws of death.

LEONTIUS.

So weak is man, when destin'd to destruction !—  
The watchful slumber, and the crafty trust.

## THE POET

### CALL.

At my command, yon iron gates unfold ;  
At my command, the sentinels retire :  
With all the license of authority,  
Through bowing slaves, I range the private  
rooms,  
And of to-morrow's action fix the scene.

### DEMETRIUS.

To-morrow's action ! Can that hoary wisdom,  
Borne down with years, still dote upon to-morrow ?  
That fatal mistress of the young, the lazy,  
The coward, and the fool, condemn'd to  
lose  
An useless life, in waiting for to-morrow,  
To gaze with longing eyes upon to-morrow,  
Till interposing death destroys the prospect !  
Strange ! that this gen'ral fraud, from day to  
day,  
Should fill the world with wretches undetected.  
The soldier, lab'ring through a winter's march,  
Still sees to-morrow drest in robes of triumph ;  
Still to the lover's long-expecting arms  
To-morrow brings the visionary bride.  
But thou, too old to bear another cheat,  
Learn, that the present hour alone is  
man's.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

LEONTIUS.

The present hour, with open arms, invites ;  
Seize the kind fair, and press her to thy  
bosom.

DEMETRIUS.

Who knows, ere this important morrow rise,  
But fear or mutiny may taint the Greeks ?  
Who knows, if Mahomet's awaking anger  
May spare the fatal bowstring till to-morrow ?

ABDALLA.

Had our first Asian foes but known this ardour,  
We still had wander'd on Tartarian hills.  
Rouse, Cali ; shall the sons of conquer'd  
Greece  
Lead us to danger, and abash their victors ?  
This night, with all her conscious stars, be  
witness,  
Who merits most, Demetrius or Abdalla.

DEMETRIUS.

Who merits most !—I knew not, we were  
rivals.

CALI.

Young man, forbear—the heat of youth, no  
more—  
Well,—'tis decreed—This night shall fix our  
fate.

## THE POET

Soon as the veil of ev'ning clouds the sky,  
With cautious secrecy, Leontius, steer  
Th' appointed vessel to yon shaded bay,  
Form'd by this garden jutting on the deep ;  
There, with your soldiers arm'd, and sails  
    expanded,  
Await our coming, equally prepar'd  
For speedy flight, or obstinate defence.  
[Exit Leont.]



SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

ON THE DEATH OF  
MR. ROBERT LEVET,  
A PRACTISER IN PHYSICK.

CONDEMN'D to hope's delusive mine,  
As on we toil, from day to day,  
By sudden blasts, or slow decline,  
Our social comforts drop away.

Well try'd, through many a varying year,  
See Levett to the grave descend,  
Officious, innocent, sincere,  
Of ev'ry friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,  
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind ;  
Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny  
Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting nature call'd for aid,  
And hov'ring death prepar'd the blow,  
His vig'rous remedy display'd  
The pow'r of art, without the show.

In mis'ry's darkest cavern known,  
His useful care was ever nigh,  
Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,  
And lonely want retir'd to die.

## THE POET

No summons, mock'd by chill delay,  
No petty gain, disdain'd by pride ;  
The modest wants of ev'ry day  
The toil of ev'ry day supply'd.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,  
Nor made a pause, nor left a void ;  
And sure the eternal master found  
The single talent well-employ'd.

The busy day—the peaceful night,  
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by ;  
His frame was firm—his pow'rs were  
bright,  
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no fiery throbbing pain,  
No cold gradations of decay,  
Death broke, at once, the vital chain,  
And freed his soul the nearest way.

SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

IMITATION OF THE STYLE OF \* \* \* \*  
[GRAY].<sup>1</sup>

HERMIT hoar, in solemn cell  
Wearing out life's ev'ning gray,  
Strike thy bosom sage! and tell  
What is bliss, and which the way?

Thus I spoke, and speaking sigh'd,  
Scarce repress'd the starting tear,  
When the hoary sage reply'd,  
Come, my lad. and drink some beer.

LINES ADDRESSED TO MISS REYNOLDS,  
RIDICULING THE MANNER OF BALLAD POETRY.<sup>2</sup>

I PRAY thee, gentle Renny dear,  
That thou wilt give to me,  
With cream and sugar temper'd well,  
Another dish of tea.

Nor fear that I, my gentle maid,  
Shall long detain the cup,  
When once unto the bottom I  
Have drunk the liquor up.

<sup>1</sup> From Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of Johnson* (1786).

<sup>2</sup> From Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Johnson* (1787).

## THE POET

Yet hear, at last, this mournful truth,  
Nor hear it with a frown,  
'Thou canst not make the tea so fast,  
As I can gulp it down.

## THE ESSAYIST

“**I** HAVE never been much a favourite of the publick,” wrote Johnson in the last number of *The Rambler*, and the common prejudice against “Johnsonese” springs largely from Johnson’s manner as an essayist. This manner was coarsely satirised by Archibald Campbell in an imaginary dialogue entitled *Lewiphanes* in 1767. The author of this piece, like many others since his time, imagined himself to be writing “Johnsonese” when he translated “I drank the King’s health” into “I bibulated the salubrity of our most amiable sovereign” or “pension from the Crown” into “annual emanation of royal munificence.”

That Johnson wrote with a heavier hand than did the authors of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* need not be denied; but in a consideration of *The Rambler* certain facts must be remembered. First, Johnson came forth openly, as Boswell says, in the character of a “majestick teacher of moral and religious wisdom” and the Rambler was nothing if not

## THE ESSAYIST

didactic; secondly, *The Rambler* was not a carefully planned series of essays written in "the shelter of academick bowers," but a series of papers written for publication every Tuesday and Friday for two years, and "he that attempts to entertain his reader with unconnected pieces, finds the irksomeness of his task rather increased than lessened by every production";<sup>1</sup> thirdly, the tricks of style belonged not only to Johnson, but to his period—the pairs of phrases can easily be matched, for instance, in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

In the pieces chosen here, *Suspirius* is said to have suggested to Goldsmith the character of Croaker in *The Good-Natur'd Man*; No. 60 gives Johnson's characteristically sane view of the writing of biography; and in No. 161 Johnson was writing of what he knew—life in a garret.

In No. 115 of *The Adventurer*, Johnson, like a true journalist, deplors the itch for writing.

"*The Idler*," says Boswell, "is evidently the work of the same mind which produced *The Rambler*, but has less body and more spirit." To the modern reader the change is all to the good; and the description of Sober

<sup>1</sup> *Rambler* No. 184.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

(who is Johnson himself), of the female bargain-hunter, of the art of advertising, and of the functions of the traveller should be a sufficient refutation of the traditional view that Johnson is unreadable.

## THE ESSAYIST

### *From* THE RAMBLER

NO. 59. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1750.

*Est aliquid fatale malum per verba levare,  
Hoc querulam Prognem Halcyonenque facit :  
Hoc erat in gelido quare Pæantius antro  
Voce fatigaret Lemnia saxa sua.  
Strangulat inclusus dolor atque exæstuat intus,  
Cogitur et vires multiplicare suas.*

OVID. Trist. vi. 59.

Complaining oft gives respite to our grief ;  
From hence the wretched Progne sought relief,  
Hence the Pæantian chief his fate deplores,  
And vents his sorrow to the Lemnian shores :  
In vain by secrecy we would assuage  
Our cares ; conceal'd they gather tenfold rage.  
F. LEWIS.

It is common to distinguish men by the names of animals which they are supposed to resemble. Thus a hero is frequently termed a lion, and a statesman a fox, an extortioner gains the appellation of vulture, and a fop the title of monkey. There is also among the various anomalies of character, which a survey of the world exhibits, a species of beings in human form, which may be properly marked out as the screech-owls of mankind.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

These screech-owls seem to be settled in an opinion that the great business of life is to complain, and that they were born for no other purpose than to disturb the happiness of others, to lessen the little comforts, and shorten the short pleasures of our condition, by painful remembrances of the past, or melancholy prognosticks of the future ; their only care is to crush the rising hope, to damp the kindling transport, and allay the golden hours of gaiety with the hateful dross of grief and suspicion.

To those whose weakness of spirits, or timidity of temper, subjects them to impressions from others, and who are apt to suffer by fascination, and catch the contagion of misery, it is extremely unhappy to live within the compass of a screech-owl's voice ; for it will often fill their ears in the hour of dejection, terrify them with apprehensions, which their own thoughts would never have produced, and sadden, by intruded sorrows, the day which might have been passed in amusements or in business ; it will burthen the heart with unnecessary discontents, and weaken for a time that love of life which is necessary to the vigorous prosecution of any undertaking.

Though I have, like the rest of mankind, many failings and weaknesses, I have not yet, by either friends or enemies, been charged

## THE ESSAYIST

with superstition ; I never count the company which I enter, and I look at the new moon indifferently over either shoulder. I have, like most other philosophers, often heard the cuckoo without money in my pocket, and have been sometimes reproached as fool-hardy for not turning down my eyes when a raven flew over my head. I never go home abruptly because a snake crosses my way, nor have any particular dread of a climacterical year ; yet I confess that, with all my scorn of old women, and their tales, I consider it as an unhappy day when I happen to be greeted, in the morning, by Suspirius the screech-owl.

I have now known Suspirius fifty-eight years and four months, and have never yet passed an hour with him in which he has not made some attack upon my quiet. When we were first acquainted, his great topick was the misery of youth without riches ; and whenever we walked out together he solaced me with a long enumeration of pleasures, which, as they were beyond the reach of my fortune, were without the verge of my desires, and which I should never have considered as the objects of a wish, had not his unseasonable representations placed them in my sight.

Another of his topicks is the neglect of merit, with which he never fails to amuse every man whom he sees not eminently

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fortunate. If he meets with a young officer, he always informs him of gentlemen whose personal courage is unquestioned, and whose military skill qualifies them to command armies, that have, notwithstanding all their merit, grown old with subaltern commissions. For a genius in the church, he is always provided with a curacy for life. The lawyer he informs of many men of great parts and deep study, who have never had an opportunity to speak in the courts : and meeting Serenus the physician, " Ah, doctor," says he, " what a-foot still, when so many block-heads are rattling in their chariots ? I told you seven years ago that you would never meet with encouragement, and I hope you will now take more notice, when I tell you that your Greek, and your diligence, and your honesty, will never enable you to live like yonder apothecary, who prescribes to his own shop, and laughs at the physician."

Suspirius has, in his time, intercepted fifteen authors in their way to the stage ; persuaded nine and thirty merchants to retire from a prosperous trade for fear of bankruptcy, broke off an hundred and thirteen matches by prognostications of unhappiness, and enabled the small-pox to kill nineteen ladies, by perpetual alarms of the loss of beauty.

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Whenever my evil stars bring us together, he never fails to represent to me the folly of my pursuits, and informs me that we are much older than when we began our acquaintance, that the infirmities of decrepitude are coming fast upon me, that whatever I now get, I shall enjoy but a little time, that fame is to a man tottering on the edge of the grave of very little importance, and that the time is at hand when I ought to look for no other pleasures than a good dinner and an easy chair.

Thus he goes on in his unharmonious strain, displaying present miseries, and foreboding more, *νυκτίκοραξ ἄει θανατήφορος*, every syllable is loaded with misfortune, and death is always brought nearer to the view. Yet, what always raises my resentment and indignation, I do not perceive that his mournful meditations have much effect upon himself. He talks and has long talked of calamities, without discovering otherwise than by the tone of his voice, that he feels any of the evils which he bewails or threatens, but has the same habit of uttering lamentations, as others of telling stories, and falls into expressions of condolence for past, or apprehension of future mischiefs, as all men studious of their ease have recourse to those subjects upon which they can most fluently or copiously discourse.

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It is reported of the Sybarites, that they destroyed all their cocks, that they might dream out their morning dreams without disturbance. Though I would not so far promote effeminacy as to propose the Sybarites for an example, yet since there is no man so corrupt or foolish, but something useful may be learned from him, I could wish that, in imitation of a people not often to be copied, some regulations might be made to exclude screech-owls from all company, as the enemies of mankind, and confine them to some proper receptacle, where they may mingle sighs at leisure, and thicken the gloom of one another.

*Thou prophet of evil,* says Homer's Agamemnon, *thou never foretellest me good, but the joy of thy heart is to predict misfortunes.* Whoever is of the same temper, might there find the means of indulging his thoughts, and improving his vein of denunciation, and the flock of screech-owls might hoot together without injury to the rest of the world.

Yet, though I have so little kindness for this dark generation, I am very far from intending to debar the soft and tender mind from the privilege of complaining, when the sigh arises from the desire not of giving pain, but of gaining ease. To hear complaints with patience, even when complaints are vain, is one of the duties of friendship ; and though

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it must be allowed that he suffers most like  
a hero that hides his grief in silence,

*Spem vultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem ;*  
His outward smiles conceal'd his inward smart ;  
DRYDEN.

yet it cannot be denied, that he who complains  
acts like a man, like a social being, who looks  
for help from his fellow-creatures. Pity is to  
many of the unhappy a source of comfort in  
hopeless distresses, as it contributes to recom-  
mend them to themselves, by proving that  
they have not lost the regard of others ; and  
heaven seems to indicate the duty even of  
barren compassion, by inclining us to weep  
for evils which we cannot remedy.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

NO. 60. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1750.

*Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,  
Plenius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.*

HOR. Lib. i. Epist. ii. 3.

Whose works the beautiful and base contain,  
Of vice and virtue more instructive rules,  
Than all the sober sages of the schools. FRANCIS.

ALL joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination, that realize the event however fictitious, or approximates it however remote, by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortune we contemplate ; so that we feel, while the deception lasts, whatever motions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves.

Our passions are therefore more strongly moved, in proportion as we can more readily adopt the pains or pleasure proposed to our minds, by recognising them as once our own, or considering them as naturally incident to our state of life. It is not easy for the most artful writer to give us an interest in happiness or misery, which we think ourselves never likely to feel, and with which we have never yet been made acquainted, Histories of the

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downfall of kingdoms, and revolutions of empires, are read with great tranquillity ; the imperial tragedy pleases common auditors only by its pomp of ornament, and grandeur of ideas ; and the man whose faculties have been engrossed by business, and whose heart never fluttered but at the rise or fall of the stocks, wonders how the attention can be seized, or the affection agitated, by a tale of love.

Those parallel circumstances and kindred images, to which we readily conform our minds, are, above all other writings, to be found in narratives of the lives of particular persons ; and therefore no species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition.

The general and rapid narratives of history, which involve a thousand fortunes in the business of a day, and complicate innumerable incidents in one great transaction, afford few lessons applicable to private life, which derives its comforts and its wretchedness from the right or wrong management of things, which nothing but their frequency makes considerable, *Parva si non fiant quotidie*,



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says Pliny, and which can have no place in those relations which never descend below the consultation of senates, the motions of armies, and the schemes of conspirators.

I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful. For, not only every man has, in the mighty mass of the world, great numbers in the same condition with himself, to whom his mistakes and miscarriages, escapes and expedients, would be of immediate and apparent use; but there is such an uniformity in the state of man, considered apart from adventitious and separable decorations and disguises, that there is scarce any possibility of good or ill, but is common to human kind. A great part of the time of those who are placed at the greatest distance by fortune, or by temper, must unavoidably pass in the same manner; and though, when the claims of nature are satisfied, caprice, and vanity, and accident, begin to produce discriminations and peculiarities, yet the eye is not very heedful or quick, which cannot discover the same causes still terminating their influence in the same effects, though sometimes accelerated, sometimes retarded, or perplexed by multiplied combinations. We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope,

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obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure.

It is frequently objected to relations of particular lives, that they are not distinguished by any striking or wonderful vicissitudes. The scholar who passed his life among his books, the merchant who conducted only his own affairs, the priest, whose sphere of action was not extended beyond that of his duty, are considered as no proper objects of publick regard, however they might have excelled in their several stations, whatever might have been their learning, integrity, and piety. But this notion arises from false measures of excellence and dignity, and must be eradicated by considering, that in the esteem of uncorrupted reason, what is of most use is of most value.

It is, indeed, not improper to take honest advantages of prejudice, and to gain attention by a celebrated name ; but the business of a biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents, which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestick privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue. The account of Thuanus is, with great propriety, said by its author to have been written,

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that it might lay open to posterity the private and familiar character of that man, *cujus ingenium et candorem ex ipsius scriptis sunt olim semper miraturi*, whose candour and genius will to the end of time be by his writings preserved in admiration.

There are many invisible circumstances which, whether we read as inquirers after natural and moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than publick occurrences. Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot, in his account of Cataline, to remark that *his walk was now quick, and again slow*, as an indication of a mind revolving something with violent commotion. Thus the story of Melancthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us, that when he made an appointment, he expected not only the hour, but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense: and all the plans and enterprizes of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal character, which represents him as *careful of his health, and negligent of his life*.

But biography has often been allotted to writers who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent

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about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from publick papers, but imagine themselves writing a life when they exhibit a chronological series or preferments ; and so little regard the manners or behaviour of their heroes, that more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.

If now and then they condescend to inform the world of particular facts, they are not always so happy as to select the most important. I know not well what advantage posterity can receive from the only circumstance by which Tickell has distinguished Addison from the rest of mankind, *the irregularity of his pulse* : nor can I think myself overpaid for the time spent in reading the life of Malherb by being enabled to relate after the learned biographer, that Malherb had two predominant opinions ; one, that the looseness of a single woman might destroy all her boast of ancient descent ; the other, that the French beggars made use very improperly and barbarously of the phrase *noble Gentleman*, because either word included the sense of both.

There are, indeed, some natural reasons why

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these narratives are often written by such as were not likely to give much instruction or delight, and why most accounts of particular persons are barren and useless. If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence ; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition. We know how few can pourtray a living acquaintance, except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind ; and it may easily be imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original.

If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection ; we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyrick, and not to be known from one another, but by extrinsick and

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casual circumstances. "Let me remember," says Hale, "when I find myself inclined to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country." If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

NO. 161. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1751.

*Οὐχὶ γὰρ φύλλων γένεη, τοιηδε καὶ Ἄνδρων.* HOM. II, T'.

Frail as the leaves that quiver on the sprays,  
Like them man flourishes, like them decays.

MR. RAMBLER.

SIR,

You have formerly observed that curiosity often terminates in barren knowledge, and that the mind is prompted to study and inquiry rather by the uneasiness of ignorance, than the hope of profit. Nothing can be of less importance to any present interest, than the fortune of those who have been long lost in the grave, and from whom nothing now can be hoped or feared. Yet, to rouse the zeal of a true antiquary, little more is necessary than to mention a name which mankind have conspired to forget; he will make his way to remote scenes of action through obscurity and contradiction, as Tully sought amidst bushes and brambles the tomb of Archimedes.

It is not easy to discover how it concerns him that gathers the produce, or receives the

## THE ESSAYIST

rent of an estate, to know through what families the land has passed, who is registered in the Conqueror's survey as its possessor, how often it has been forfeited by treason, or how often sold by prodigality. The power or wealth of the present inhabitants of a country cannot be much increased by an inquiry after the names of those barbarians, who destroyed one another twenty centuries ago, in contests for the shelter of woods, or convenience of pasturage. Yet we see that no man can be at rest in the enjoyment of a new purchase till he has learned the history of his grounds from the ancient inhabitants of the parish, and that no nation omits to record the actions of their ancestors, however bloody, savage, and rapacious.

The same disposition, as different opportunities call it forth, discovers itself in great or little things. I have always thought it unworthy of a wise man to slumber in total inactivity, only because he happens to have no employment equal to his ambition or genius: it is therefore my custom to apply my attention to the objects before me, and as I cannot think any place wholly unworthy of notice that affords a habitation to a man of letters, I have collected the history and antiquities of the several garrets in which I have resided.



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*Quantulacunque estis, vos ego magna voco.*

How small to others, but how great to me !

Many of these narratives my industry has been able to extend to a considerable length ; but the woman with whom I now lodge has lived only eighteen months in the house, and can give no account of its ancient revolutions ; the plaisterer having, at her entrance, obliterated, by his white-wash, all the smoky memorials which former tenants had left upon the ceiling, and perhaps drawn the veil of oblivion over politicians, philosophers, and poets.

When I first cheapened my lodgings, the landlady told me, that she hoped I was not an author, for the lodgers on the first floor had stipulated that the upper rooms should not be occupied by a noisy trade. I very readily promised to give no disturbance to her family, and soon despatched a bargain on the usual terms.

I had not slept many nights in my new apartment before I began to inquire after my predecessors, and found my landlady, whose imagination is filled chiefly with her own affairs, very ready to give me information.

Curiosity, like all other desires, produces pain as well as pleasure. Before she began her narrative, I had heated my head with expectations of adventures and discoveries, of

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elegance in disguise, and learning in distress ; and was somewhat mortified when I heard that the first tenant was a tailor, of whom nothing was remembered but that he complained of his room for want of light ; and, after having lodged in it a month, and paid only a week's rent, pawned a piece of cloth which he was trusted to cut out, and was forced to make a precipitate retreat from this quarter of the town.

The next was a young woman newly arrived from the country, who lived for five weeks with great regularity, and became by frequent treats very much the favourite of the family, but at last received visits so frequently from a cousin in Chcapside, that she brought the reputation of the house into danger, and was therefore dismissed with good advice.

The room then stood empty for a fortnight ; my landlady began to think that she had judged hardly, and often wished for such another lodger. At last, an elderly man of a grave aspect read the bill, and bargained for the room at the very first price that was asked. He lived in close retirement, seldom went out till evening, and then returned early, sometimes cheerful, and at other times dejected. It was remarkable, that whatever he purchased, he never had small money in his pocket ; and, though cool and temperate on

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other occasions, was always vehement and stormy, till he received his change. He paid his rent with great exactness, and seldom failed once a week to requite my landlady's civility with a supper. At last, such is the fate of human felicity, the house was alarmed at midnight by the constable, who demanded to search the garrets. My landlady assuring him that he had mistaken the door, conducted him up stairs, where he found the tools of a coiner ; but the tenant had crawled along the roof to an empty house, and escaped ; much to the joy of my landlady, who declares him a very honest man, and wonders why any body should be hanged for making money when such numbers are in want of it. She however confesses that she shall, for the future, always question the character of those who take her garret without beating down the price.

The bill was then placed again in the window, and the poor woman was teased for seven weeks by innumerable passengers, who obliged her to climb with them every hour up five stories, and then disliked the prospect, hated the noise of a publick street, thought the stairs narrow, objected to a low ceiling, required the walls to be hung with fresher paper, asked questions about the neighbourhood, could not think of living so far from their acquaintance, wished the windows had

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looked to the south rather than the west, told how the door and chimney might have been better disposed, bid her half the price that she asked, or promised to give her earnest the next day, and came no more.

At last, a short meagre man, in a tarnished waistcoat, desired to see the garret, and when he had stipulated for two long shelves, and a larger table, hired it at a low rate. When the affair was completed, he looked round him with great satisfaction, and repeated some words which the woman did not understand. In two days he brought a great box of books, took possession of his room, and lived very inoffensively, except that he frequently disturbed the inhabitants of the next floor by unseasonable noises. He was generally in bed at noon, but from evening to midnight he sometimes talked aloud with great vehemence, sometimes stamped as in rage, sometimes threw down his poker, then clattered his chairs, then sat down in deep thought, and again burst out into loud vociferations; sometimes he would sigh as oppressed with misery, and sometimes shaken with convulsive laughter. When he encountered any of the family, he gave way or bowed, but rarely spoke, except that as he went up stairs he often repeated,

—'Ος ἀέθρατα δώματα ναίει

This habitant th' aerial regions boast;

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hard words, to which his neighbours listened so often, that they learned them without understanding them. What was his employment she did not venture to ask him, but at last heard a printer's boy inquire for the author.

My landlady was very often advised to beware of this strange man, who, though he was quiet for the present, might perhaps become outrageous in the hot months : but, as she was punctually paid, she could not find any sufficient reason for dismissing him, till one night he convinced her, by setting fire to his curtains, that it was not safe to have an author for her inmate.

She had then for six weeks a succession of tenants, who left the house on Saturday, and, instead of paying their rent, stormed at their landlady. At last she took in two sisters, one of whom had spent her little fortune in procuring remedies for a lingering disease, and was now supported and attended by the other : she climbed with difficulty to the apartment, where she languished eight weeks without impatience, or lamentation, except for the expense and fatigue which her sister suffered, and then calmly and contentedly expired. The sister followed her to the grave, paid the few debts which they had contracted, wiped away the tears of useless sorrow, and,

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returning to the business of common life, resigned to me the vacant habitation.

Such, Mr. Rambler, are the changes which have happened in the narrow space where my present fortune has fixed my residence. So true it is that amusement and instruction are always at hand for those who have skill and willingness to find them ; and, so just is the observation of Juvenal, that a single house will shew whatever is done or suffered in the world.

I am, Sir, &c.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

*From* THE ADVENTURER.

NO. 115. TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1753.

*Scribimus indocti doctique.* HOR. Lib. ii. Ep. i 17.

All dare to write, who can or cannot read.

THEY who have attentively considered the history of mankind, know that every age has its peculiar character. At one time, no desire is felt but for military honours ; every summer affords battles and sieges, and the world is filled with ravage, bloodshed, and devastation : this sanguinary fury at length subsides, and nations are divided into factions, by controversies about points that will never be decided. Men then grow weary of debate and altercation, and apply themselves to the arts of profit ; trading companies are formed, manufactures improved, and navigation extended ; and nothing is any longer thought on, but the increase and preservation of property, the artifices of getting money, and the pleasures of spending it.

The present age, if we consider chiefly the state of our own country, may be styled, with great propriety, *The Age of Authors* ; for, perhaps, there never was a time in which

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men of all degrees of ability, of every kind of education, of every profession and employment, were posting with ardour so general to the press. The province of writing was formerly left to those, who by study, or appearance of study, were supposed to have gained knowledge unattainable by the busy part of mankind; but in these enlightened days, every man is qualified to instruct every other man: and he that beats the anvil, or guides the plough, not content with supplying corporal necessities, amuses himself in the hours of leisure with providing intellectual pleasures for his countrymen.

It may be observed, that of this, as of other evils, complaints have been made by every generation: but though it may, perhaps, be true, that at all times more have been willing than have been able to write, yet there is no reason for believing, that the dogmatical legions of the present race were ever equalled in number by any former period: for so widely is spread the itch of literary praise, that almost every man is an author, either in act or in purpose: has either bestowed his favours on the publick, or withholds them, that they may be more seasonably offered, or made more worthy of acceptance.

In former times, the pen, like the sword, was considered as consigned by nature to the



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hands of men ; the ladies contented themselves with private virtues and domestick excellence ; and a female writer, like a female warrior, was considered as a kind of eccentric being, that deviated, however illustriously, from her due sphere of motion, and was, therefore, rather to be gazed at with wonder, than countenanced by imitation. But as the times past are said to have seen a nation of Amazons, who drew the bow and wielded the battle-axe, formed encampments and wasted nations, the revolution of years has now produced a generation of Amazons of the pen, who with the spirit of their predecessors have set masculine tyranny at defiance, asserted their claim to the regions of science, and seem resolved to contest the usurpations of virility.

Some indeed there are, of both sexes, who are authors only in desire, but have not yet attained the power of executing their intentions ; whose performances have not arrived at bulk sufficient to form a volume, or who have not the confidence, however impatient of nameless obscurity, to solicit openly the assistance of the printer. Among these are the innumerable correspondents of publick papers, who are always offering assistance which no man will receive, and suggesting hints that are never taken ; and who complain loudly of the perverseness and arrogance

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of authors, lament their insensibility of their own interest, and fill the coffee-houses with dark stories of performances by eminent hands, which have been offered and rejected.

To what cause this universal eagerness of writing can be properly ascribed, I have not yet been able to discover. It is said, that every art is propagated in proportion to the rewards conferred upon it ; a position from which a stranger would naturally infer, that literature was now blessed with patronage far transcending the candour or munificence of the Augustan age, that the road to greatness was open to none but authors, and that by writing alone riches and honour were to be obtained.

But since it is true, that writers, like other competitors, are very little disposed to favour one another, it is not to be expected, that at a time when every man writes, any man will patronize ; and, accordingly, there is not one that I can recollect at present, who professes the least regard for the votaries of science, invites the addresses of learned men, or seems to hope for reputation from any pen but his own.

The cause, therefore, of this epidemical conspiracy for the destruction of paper, must remain a secret : nor can I discover, whether we owe it to the influences of the constellations,

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or the intemperature of seasons : whether the long continuance of the wind at any single point, or intoxicating vapours exhaled from the earth, have turned our nobles and our peasants, our soldiers and traders, our men and women, all into wits, philosophers, and writers.

It is, indeed, of more importance to search out the cure than the cause of this intellectual malady ; and he would deserve well of this country, who, instead of amusing himself with conjectural speculations, should find means of persuading the peer to inspect his steward's accounts, or repair the rural mansion of his ancestors ; who could replace the tradesman behind his counter, and send back the farmer to the mattock and the flail.

General irregularities are known in time to remedy themselves. By the constitution of ancient Egypt, the priesthood was continually increasing, till at length there was no people beside themselves ; the establishment was then dissolved, and the number of priests was reduced and limited. Thus among us, writers will, perhaps, be multiplied, till no readers will be found, and then the ambition of writing must necessarily cease.

But as it will be long before the cure is thus gradually effected, and the evil should be stopped, if it be possible, before it rises to so great a height, I could wish that both

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sexes would fix their thoughts upon some salutary considerations, which might repress their ardour for that reputation, which not one of many thousands is fated to obtain.

Let it be deeply impressed, and frequently recollected, that he who has not obtained the proper qualifications of an author, can have no excuse for the arrogance of writing, but the power of imparting to mankind something necessary to be known. A man uneducated or unlettered may sometimes start a useful thought, or make a lucky discovery, or obtain by chance some secret of nature, or some intelligence of facts, of which the most enlightened mind may be ignorant, and which it is better to reveal, though by a rude and unskilful communication, than to lose for ever by suppressing it.

But few will be justified by this plea ; for of the innumerable books and pamphlets that have overflowed the nation, scarce one has made any addition to real knowledge, or contained more than a transposition of common sentiments, and a repetition of common phrases.

It will be naturally inquired, when the man who feels an inclination to write, may venture to suppose himself properly qualified ; and, since every man is inclined to think well of his own intellect, by what test he may try

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his abilities, without hazarding the contempt or resentment of the publick.

The first qualification of a writer is a perfect knowledge of the subject which he undertakes to treat ; since we cannot teach what we do not know, nor can properly undertake to instruct others while we are ourselves in want of instruction. The next requisite is, that he be master of the language in which he delivers his sentiments : if he treats of science and demonstration, that he has attained a style clear, pure, nervous, and expressive : if his topics be probable and persuasory, that he be able to recommend them by the super-addition of elegance and imagery, to display the colours of varied diction, and pour forth the musick of modulated periods.

If it be again inquired, upon what principles any man shall conclude that he wants those powers, it may be readily answered, that no end is attained but by the proper means ; he only can rationally presume that he understands a subject, who has read and compared the writers that have hitherto discussed it, familiarized their arguments to himself by long meditation, consulted the foundations of different systems, and separated truth from error by a rigorous examination.

In like manner, he only has a right to suppose that he can express his thoughts,

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whatever they are, with perspicuity or elegance, who has carefully perused the best authors, accurately noted their diversities of style, diligently selected the best modes of diction, and familiarized them by long habits of attentive practice.

No man is a rhetorician or philosopher by chance. He who knows that he undertakes to write on questions which he has never studied, may without hesitation determine, that he is about to waste his own time and that of his reader, and expose himself to the derision of those whom he aspires to instruct: he that without forming his style by the study of the best models hastens to obtrude his compositions on the publick, may be certain, that whatever hope or flattery may suggest, he shall shock the learned ear with barbarisms, and contribute, wherever his work shall be received, to the depravation of taste and the corruption of language.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

### *From THE IDLER*

NO. 31. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1758.

MANY moralists have remarked, that pride has of all human vices the widest dominion, appears in the greatest multiplicity of forms, and lies hid under the greatest variety of disguises ; of disguises, which, like the moon's *veil of brightness*, are both its *lustre and its shade*, and betray it to others, though they hide it from ourselves.

It is not my intention to degrade pride from this pre-eminence of mischief ; yet I know not whether idleness may not maintain a very doubtful and obstinate competition.

There are some that profess idleness in its full dignity, who call themselves the *Idle*, as Busiris in the play calls himself the *Proud* ; who boast that they do nothing, and thank their stars that they have nothing to do ; who sleep every night till they can sleep no longer, and rise only that exercise may enable them to sleep again ; who prolong the reign of darkness by double curtains, and never see the sun but to *tell him how they hate his beams* ; whose whole labour is to vary the posture of indolence, and whose day differs from their

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night, but as a couch or chair differs from a bed.

These are the true and open votaries of idleness, for whom she weaves the garlands of poppies, and into whose cup she pours the waters of oblivion ; who exist in a state of unruffled stupidity, forgetting and forgotten ; who have long ceased to live, and at whose death the survivors can only say, that they have ceased to breathe.

But idleness predominates in many lives where it is not suspected ; for, being a vice which terminates in itself, it may be enjoyed without injury to others ; and it is therefore not watched like fraud, which endangers property ; or like pride, which naturally seeks its gratifications in another's inferiority. Idleness is a silent and peaceful quality, that neither raises envy by ostentation, nor hatred by opposition ; and therefore nobody is busy to censure or detect it.

As pride sometimes is hid under humility, idleness is often covered by turbulence and hurry. He that neglects his known duty and real employment, naturally endeavours to crowd his mind with something that may bar out the remembrance of his own folly, and does any thing but what he ought to do with eager diligence, that he may keep himself in his own favour.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Some are always in a state of preparation, occupied in previous measures, forming plans, accumulating materials, and providing for the main affair. These are certainly under the secret power of idleness. Nothing is to be expected from the workman whose tools are for ever to be sought. I was once told by a great master, that no man ever excelled in painting, who was eminently curious about pencils and colours.

There are others to whom idleness dictates another expedient, by which life may be passed unprofitably away without the tediousness of many vacant hours. The art is, to fill the day with petty business, to have always something in hand which may raise curiosity, but not solicitude, and keep the mind in a state of action, but not of labour.

This art has for many years been practised by my old friend Sober with wonderful success. Sober is a man of strong desires and quick imagination, so exactly balanced by the love of ease, that they can seldom stimulate him to any difficult undertaking; they have, however, so much power, that they will not suffer him to lie quite at rest; and though they do not make him sufficiently useful to others, they make him at least weary of himself.

Mr. Sober's chief pleasure is conversation; there is no end of his talk or his attention;

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to speak or to hear is equally pleasing ; for he still fancies that he is teaching or learning something, and is free for the time from his own reproaches.

But there is one time at night when he must go home, that his friends may sleep ; and another time in the morning, when all the world agrees to shut out interruption. These are the moments of which poor Sober trembles at the thought. But the misery of these tiresome intervals he has many means of alleviating. He has persuaded himself that the manual arts are undeservedly overlooked ; he has observed in many trades the effects of close thought, and just ratiocination. From speculation he proceeded to practice, and supplied himself with the tools of a carpenter, with which he mended his coal-box very successfully, and which he still continues to employ, as he finds occasion.

He has attempted at other times the crafts of the shoemaker, tinman, plumber, and potter ; in all these arts he has failed, and resolves to qualify himself for them by better information. But his daily amusement is chymistry. He has a small furnace, which he employs in distillation, and which has long been the solace of his life. He draws oils and waters, and essences and spirits, which he knows to be of no use ; sits and counts the

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drops, as they come from his retort, and forgets that, whilst a drop is falling, a moment flies away.

Poor Sober ! I have often teased him with reproof, and he has often promised reformation ; for no man is so much open to conviction as the Idler, but there is none on whom it operates so little. What will be the effect of this paper I know not ; perhaps, he will read it and laugh, and light the fire in his furnace ; but my hope is, that he will quit his trifles, and betake himself to rational and useful diligence.

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NO. 35. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1758.

TO THE IDLER.

MR. IDLER,

IF it be difficult to persuade the idle to be busy, it is likewise, as experience has taught me, not easy to convince the busy that it is better to be idle. When you shall despair of stimulating sluggishness to motion, I hope you will turn your thoughts towards the means of stilling the bustle of pernicious activity.

I am the unfortunate husband of a *buyer of bargains*. My wife has somewhere heard, that a good housewife *never* has any thing to *purchase when it is wanted*. This maxim is often in her mouth, and always in her head. She is not one of those philosophical talkers that speculate without practice; and learn sentences of wisdom only to repeat them: she is always making additions to her stores; she never looks into a broker's shop, but she spies something that may be wanted some time; and it is impossible to make her pass the door of a house where she hears *goods selling by auction*.

Whatever she thinks cheap, she holds it the

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

duty of an economist to buy ; in consequence of this maxim, we are encumbered on every side with useless lumber. The servants can scarcely creep to their beds through the chests and boxes that surround them. The carpenter is employed once a week in building closets, fixing cupboards, and fastening shelves ; and my house has the appearance of a ship stored for a voyage to the colonies.

I had often observed that advertisements set her on fire ; and therefore, pretending to emulate her laudable frugality, I forbade the newspaper to be taken any longer ; but my precaution is vain ; I know not by what fatality, or by what confederacy, every catalogue of *genuine furniture* comes to her hand, every advertisement of a warehouse newly opened, is in her pocketbook, and she knows before any of her neighbours when the stock of any man *leaving off trade* is to be sold *cheap for ready money*.

Such intelligence is to my dear-one the Syren's song. No engagement, no duty, no interest, can withhold her from a sale, from which she always returns congratulating herself upon her dexterity at a bargain ; the porter lays down his burden in the hall ; she displays her new acquisitions, and spends the rest of the day in contriving where they shall be put.

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As she cannot bear to have any thing uncomplete, one purchase necessitates another; she has twenty feather-beds more than she can use, and a late sale has supplied her with a proportionable number of Witney blankets, a large roll of linen for sheets, and five quilts for every bed, which she bought because the seller told her, that if she would clear his hands he would let her have a bargain.

Thus by hourly encroachments my habitation is made narrower and narrower; the dining-room is so crowded with tables, that dinner scarcely can be served; the parlour is decorated with so many piles of china, that I dare not step within the door; at every turn of the stairs I have a clock, and half the windows of the upper floors are darkened, that shelves may be set before them.

This, however, might be borne, if she would gratify her own inclinations without opposing mine. But I, who am idle, am luxurious, and she condemns me to live upon salt provisions. She knows the loss of buying in small quantities, we have, therefore, whole hogs and quarters of oxen. Part of our meat is tainted before it is eaten, and part is thrown away because it is spoiled; but she persists in her system, and will never buy any thing by single pennyworths.

The common vice of those who are still

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grasping at more, is to neglect that which they already possess ; but from this failing my charmer is free. It is the great care of her life that the pieces of beef should be boiled in the order in which they are bought ; that the second bag of pease should not be opened till the first be eaten ; that every feather-bed should be lain on in its turn ; that the carpets should be taken out of the chests once a month and brushed, and the rolls of linen opened now and then before the fire. She is daily inquiring after the best traps for mice, and keeps the rooms always scented by fumigations to destroy the moths. She employs workmen, from time to time, to adjust six clocks that never go, and clean five jacks that rust in the garret ; and a woman in the next alley lives by scouring the brass and pewter, which are only laid up to tarnish again.

She is always imagining some distant time, in which she shall use whatever she accumulates : she has four looking-glasses which she cannot hang up in her house, but which will be handsome in more lofty rooms ; and pays rent for the place of a vast copper in some warehouse, because, when we live in the country, we shall brew our own beer.

Of this life I have long been weary, but know not how to change it : all the married

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men whom I consult advise me to have patience; but some old bachelors are of opinion that, since she loves sales so well, she should have a sale of her own; and I have, I think, resolved to open her hoards, and advertise an auction.

I am, Sir,  
Your very humble servant,  
PETER PLENTY.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

NO. 40. SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 1759.

THE practice of appending to the narratives of publick transactions more minute and domestick intelligence, and filling the newspapers with advertisements, has grown up by slow degrees to its present state.

Genius is shown only by invention. The man who first took advantage of the general curiosity that was excited by a siege or battle, to betray the readers of news into the knowledge of the shop where the best puffs and powder were to be sold, was undoubtedly a man of great sagacity, and profound skill in the nature of man. But when he had once shown the way, it was easy to follow him ; and every man now knows a ready method of informing the publick of all that he desires to buy or sell ; whether his wares be material or intellectual ; whether he makes clothes, or teaches the mathematicks ; whether he be a tutor that wants a pupil, or a pupil that wants a tutor.

Whatever is common is despised. Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused, and it is, therefore, become necessary to gain attention by magnifi-

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cence of promises, and by eloquence sometimes sublime and sometimes pathetick.

Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement. I remember a *wash-ball* that had a quality truly wonderful—it gave an *exquisite edge to the razor*. And there are now to be sold, *for ready money only*, some *duvets for bed-coverings, of down, beyond comparison superior to what is called otter-down*, and indeed such, that its *many excellencies cannot be here set forth*. With one excellence we are made acquainted—it is *warmer than four or five blankets, and lighter than one*.

There are some, however, that know the prejudice of mankind in favour of modest sincerity. The vender of the *beautifying fluid* sells a lotion that repels pimples, washes away freckles, smooths the skin, and plumps the flesh; and yet, with a generous abhorrence of ostentation, confesses, that it will not *restore the bloom of fifteen to a lady of fifty*.

The true pathos of advertisements must have sunk deep into the heart of every man that remembers the zeal shown by the seller of the *anodyne necklace*, for the ease and safety of *poor teething infants*, and the affection with which he warned every mother, that *she would never forgive herself*, if her infant should perish without a necklace.

I cannot but remark to the celebrated

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author who gave, in his notifications of the camel and dromedary, so many specimens of the genuine sublime, that there is now arrived another subject yet more worthy of his pen. *A famous Mohawk Indian warrior, who took Dieskaw the French general prisoner, dressed in the same manner with the native Indians when they go to war, with his face and body painted, with his scalping-knife, tom-axe, and all other implements of war ! a sight worthy the curiosity of every true Briton !* This is a very powerful description ; but a critick of great refinement would say, that it conveys rather *horror* than *terroure*. An Indian, dressed as he goes to war, may bring company together ; but if he carries the scalping-knife and tom-axe, there are many true Britons that will never be persuaded to see him but through a grate.

It has been remarked by the severer judges, that the salutary sorrow of tragick scenes is too soon effaced by the merriment of the epilogue ; the same inconvenience arises from the improper disposition of advertisements. The noblest objects may be so associated as to be made ridiculous. The camel and dromedary themselves might have lost much of their dignity between *the true flower of mustard* and *the original Daffy's elixir* ; and I could not but feel some indignation when I found this

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illustrious Indian warrior immediately succeeded by a *fresh parcel of Dublin butter*.

The trade of advertising is now so near to perfection, that it is not easy to propose any improvement. But as every art ought to be exercised in due subordination to the publick good, I cannot but propose it as a moral question to these masters of the publick ear, Whether they do not sometimes play too wantonly with our passions, as when the registrar of lottery-tickets invites us to his shop by an account of the prize which he sold last year; and whether the advertising controvertists do not indulge asperity of language without any adequate provocation; as in the dispute about *straps for razors*, now happily subsided, and in the altercation which at present subsists concerning *eau de luce*?

In an advertisement it is allowed to every man to speak well of himself, but I know not why he should assume the privilege of censuring his neighbour. He may proclaim his own virtue or skill, but ought not to exclude others from the same pretensions.

Every man that advertises his own excellence should write with some consciousness of a character which dares to call the attention of the publick. He should remember that his name is to stand in the same paper with those of the king of Prussia and the emperor of

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Germany, and endeavour to make himself worthy of such association.

Some regard is likewise to be paid to posterity. There are men of diligence and curiosity who treasure up the papers of the day merely because others neglect them, and in time they will be scarce. When these collections shall be read in another century, how will numberless contradictions be reconciled ? and how shall fame be possibly distributed among the tailors and bodice-makers of the present age ?

Surely these things deserve consideration. It is enough for me to have hinted my desire that these abuses may be rectified ; but such is the state of nature, that what all have the right of doing, many will attempt without sufficient care or due qualifications.

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NO. 97. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1760.

It may, I think, be justly observed, that few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travellers. One part of mankind is naturally curious to learn the sentiments, manners, and condition of the rest ; and every mind that has leisure or power to extend its views, must be desirous of knowing in what proportion Providence has distributed the blessings of nature, or the advantages of art, among the several nations of the earth.

This general desire easily procures readers to every book from which it can expect gratification. The adventurer upon unknown coasts, and the describer of distant regions, is always welcomed as a man who has laboured for the pleasure of others, and who is able to enlarge our knowledge and rectify our opinions ; but when the volume is opened, nothing is found but such general accounts as leave no distinct idea behind them, or such minute enumerations as few can read with either profit or delight.

Every writer of travels should consider, that, like all other authors, he undertakes either to instruct or please, or to mingle pleasure with

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instruction. He that instructs must offer to the mind something to be imitated, or something to be avoided ; he that pleases must offer new images to his reader, and enable him to form a tacit comparison of his own state with that of others.

The greater part of travellers tell nothing, because their method of travelling supplies them with nothing to be told. He that enters a town at night, and surveys it in the morning, and then hastens away to another place, and guesses at the manners of the inhabitants by the entertainment which his inn afforded him, may please himself for a time with a hasty change of scenes, and a confused remembrance of palaces and churches ; he may gratify his eye with a variety of landscapes, and regale his palate with a succession of vintages ; but let him be contented to please himself without endeavouring to disturb others. Why should he record excursions by which nothing could be learned, or wish to make a show of knowledge, which, without some power of intuition unknown to other mortals, he never could attain ?

Of those who crowd the world with their itineraries, some have no other purpose than to describe the face of the country ; those who sit idle at home, and are curious to know what is done or suffered in distant countries, may be informed by one of these wanderers,

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that on a certain day he set out early with the caravan, and in the first hour's march saw, towards the south, a hill covered with trees, then passed over a stream, which ran northward with a swift course, but which is probably dry in the summer months; that an hour after he saw something to the right which looked at a distance like a castle with towers, but which he discovered afterwards to be a craggy rock; that he then entered a valley, in which he saw several trees tall and flourishing, watered by a rivulet not marked in the maps, of which he was not able to learn the name; that the road afterward grew stony, and the country uneven, where he observed among the hills many hollows worn by torrents, and was told that the road was passable only part of the year; that going on they found the remains of a building, once, perhaps, a fortress to secure the pass, or to restrain the robbers, of which the present inhabitants can give no other account than that it is haunted by fairies; that they went to dine at the foot of a rock, and travelled the rest of the day along the banks of a river, from which the road turned aside towards evening, and brought them within sight of a village, which was once a considerable town, but which afforded them neither good victuals nor commodious lodging.



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Thus he conducts his reader through wet and dry, over rough and smooth, without incidents, without reflection ; and, if he obtains his company for another day, will dismiss him again at night, equally fatigued with a like succession of rocks and streams, mountains and ruins.

This is the common style of those sons of enterprise, who visit savage countries, and range through solitude and desolation ; who pass a desert, and tell that it is sandy ; who cross a valley, and find that it is green. There are others of more delicate sensibility, that visit only the realms of elegance and softness ; that wander through Italian palaces, and amuse the gentle reader with catalogues of pictures ; that hear masses in magnificent churches, and recount the number of the pillars or variegations of the pavement. And there are yet others, who, in disdain of trifles copy inscriptions elegant and rude, ancient and modern ; and transcribe into their book the walls of every edifice, sacred or civil. He that reads these books must consider his labour as its own reward ; for he will find nothing on which attention can fix, or which memory can retain.

He that would travel for the entertainment of others, should remember that the great object of remark is human life. Every nation

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has something peculiar in its manufactures, its works of genius, its medicines, its agriculture, its customs and its policy. He only is a useful traveller, who brings home something by which his country may be benefited ; who procures some supply of want, or some mitigation of evil, which may enable his readers to compare their condition with that of others, to improve it whenever it is worse, and whenever it is better to enjoy it.

## THE LEXICOGRAPHER.

THE *Preface* to the Dictionary contains some of the finest examples of Johnson's prose writing. He writes with the conscious and legitimate pride of a man who has accomplished his task, but also with the humility characteristic of the true scholar. The two specimens quoted from the Dictionary itself are chosen to illustrate the changes in the common meanings of words which have occurred since Johnson's time.

## THE LEXICOGRAPHER

*From* THE PREFACE TO THE DICTIONARY OF  
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

IN hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labour of years, to the honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology, without a contest, to the nations of the continent. The chief glory of every people arises from its authors: whether I shall add any thing by my own writings to the reputation of English literature, must be left to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressures of disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if, by my assistance, foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle

When I am animated by this wish, I look with pleasure on my book, however defective, and deliver it to the world with the spirit

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of a man that has endeavoured well. That it will immediately become popular I have not promised to myself : a few wild blunders, and risible absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free, may, for a time, furnish folly with laughter, and harden ignorance into contempt ; but useful diligence will at last prevail, and there never can be wanting some who distinguish desert ; who will consider that no dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since, while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away ; that a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life would not be sufficient ; that he, whose design includes whatever language can express, must often speak of what he does not understand ; that a writer will sometimes be hurried by eagerness to the end, and sometimes faint with weariness under a task, which Scaliger compares to the labours of the anvil and the mine ; that what is obvious is not always known, and what is known is not always present ; that sudden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance, slight avocations will seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the mind will darken learning ; and that the writer shall often in vain trace his memory, at the moment of need, for that which yesterday he knew

## THE LEXICOGRAPHER

with intuitive readiness, and which will come uncalled into his thoughts to-morrow.

In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt, which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied criticks of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second

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edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me ? I have protracted my work till most of those, whom I wished to please, have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds ; I, therefore, dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

## THE LEXICOGRAPHER

### TWO DEFINITIONS.<sup>1</sup>

ENTHU'SIAST. n. s. [ἐνθουσιασῶ]

1. One who vainly imagines a private revelation; one who has a vain confidence of his intercourse with God.

Let an *enthusiast* be principled that he or his teacher is inspired, and acted by an immediate communication of the Divine Spirit, and you in vain bring the evidence of clear reason against his doctrine. *Locke.*

2. One of a hot imagination, or violent passions.

Chapman seems to have been of an arrogant turn, and an *enthusiast* in poetry. *Pope's Pref. to the Iliads.*

3. One of elevated fancy, or exalted ideas.

At last divine Cæcilia came,  
Inventress of the vocal frame;  
The sweet *enthusiast*, from her sacred  
store,  
Enlarg'd the former narrow bounds,  
And added length to solemn sounds,  
With nature's mother-wit, and arts un-  
known before. *Dryd.*

<sup>1</sup> From the first edition of the *Dictionary* (1755).



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NE'RVIOUS. adj. [*nervosus*, Latin]. Well strung ; strong ; vigorous.

What *nervous* arms he boasts, how firm his tread,

His limbs how burn'd.

*Pope's Odyssey*, b. viii.

2. Relating to the nerves ; having the seat in the nerves.

3. [In medical cant.]. Having weak or diseased nerves.

Poor, weak, *nervous* creatures. *Cheney*.

## THE ROMANCE-WRITER

**T**HOUGH *Rasselas* may seem to the modern reader to be nothing more than a lengthy tract in prose written on the same theme as *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, it was in its own day the one really popular work which Johnson wrote.

The first chapter quoted here (Chapter VI) illustrates Johnson's interest in the art of flying, an interest which he retained throughout his life; Chapters XVII and XVIII are typical of the disappointments encountered by the prince in his search for happiness; Chapter XXXII gives Johnson a fine opportunity for the exercise of his dignified rhetoric; the last (XLV) is clearly personal in sentiment and may be compared with the conclusion of the Preface to the *Dictionary*.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

### *From* RASSELAS

#### CHAP. VI.

##### A DISSERTATION ON THE ART OF FLYING.

AMONG the artists that had been allured into the happy valley, to labour for the accommodation and pleasure of its inhabitants, was a man eminent for his knowledge of the mechanick powers, who had contrived many engines, both of use and recreation. By a wheel, which the stream turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to all the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavilion in the garden, around which he kept the air always cool by artificial showers. One of the groves, appropriated to the ladies, was ventilated by fans, to which the rivulet, that ran through it, gave a constant motion ; and instruments of soft musick were placed at proper distances, of which some played by the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.

This artist was, sometimes, visited by Rasselas, who was pleased with every kind of knowledge, imagining that the time would come, when all his acquisitions should be of

## THE ROMANCE-WRITER

use to him in the open world. He came one day to amuse himself in his usual manner, and found the master busy in building a sailing chariot: he saw that the design was, practicable upon a level surface, and, with expressions of great esteem, solicited its completion. The workman was pleased to find himself so much regarded by the prince, and resolved to gain yet higher honours. "Sir," said he, "you have seen but a small part of what the mechanick sciences can perform. I have been long of opinion, that instead of the tardy conveyance of ships and chariots, man might use the swifter migration of wings; that the fields of air are open to knowledge, and that only ignorance and idleness need crawl upon the ground."

This hint rekindled the prince's desire of passing the mountains: having seen what the mechanist had already performed, he was willing to fancy that he could do more; yet resolved to inquire further, before he suffered hope to afflict him by disappointment. "I am afraid," said he to the artist, "that your imagination prevails over your skill, and that you now tell me rather what you wish, than what you know. Every animal has his element assigned him: the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth."—"So," replied the mechanist, "fishes have the

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water, in which, yet, beasts can swim by nature, and men by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly: to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtler. We are only to proportion our power of resistance to the different density of matter through which we are to pass. You will be, necessarily, upborne by the air, if you can renew any impulse upon it, faster than the air can recede from the pressure."

"But the exercise of swimming," said the prince, "is very laborious; the strongest limbs are soon wearied; I am afraid, the act of flying will be yet more violent, and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim."

"The labour of rising from the ground," said the artist, "will be great, as we see it in the heavier domestick fowls: but as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished, till we shall arrive at a region, where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall; no care will then be necessary but to move forwards, which the gentlest impulse will effect. You, sir, whose curiosity is so extensive, will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and present-

## THE ROMANCE-WRITER

ing to him, successively, by its diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel. How must it amuse the pendent spectator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts ! To survey, with equal security, the marts of trade, and the fields of battle ; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty, and lulled by peace ! How easily shall we then trace the Nile through all its passage ; pass over to distant regions, and examine the face of nature, from one extremity of the earth to the other ! ”

“ All this,” said the prince, “ is much to be desired ; but I am afraid, that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquillity. I have been told, that respiration is difficult upon lofty mountains, yet, from these precipices, though so high as to produce great tenuity of air, it is very easy to fall ; therefore, I suspect, that from any height, where life can be supported, there may be danger of too quick descent.”

“ Nothing,” replied the artist, “ will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome. If you will favour my project, I will try the first flight at my own hazard. I have considered the structure of all volant animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat’s wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model, I shall

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

begin my task to-morrow, and in a year, expect to tower into the air beyond the malice and pursuit of man. But I will work only on this condition, that the art shall not be divulged, and that you shall not require me to make wings for any but ourselves."

"Why," said Rasselas, "should you envy others so great an advantage? All skill ought to be exerted for universal good; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received."

"If men were all virtuous," returned the artist, "I should, with great alacrity, teach them all to fly. But what would be the security of the good, if the bad could, at pleasure, invade them from the sky? Against an army sailing through the clouds, neither walls, nor mountains, nor seas could afford any security. A flight of northern savages might hover in the wind, and light, at once, with irresistible violence, upon the capital of a fruitful region, that was rolling under them. Even this valley, the retreat of princes, the abode of happiness, might be violated by the sudden descent of some of the naked nations, that swarm on the coast of the southern sea."

The prince promised secrecy, and waited for the performance, not wholly hopeless of success. He visited the work, from time to time, observed its progress, and remarked

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many ingenious contrivances, to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength. The artist was every day more certain, that he should leave vultures and eagles behind him, and the contagion of his confidence seized upon the prince.

In a year the wings were finished, and, on a morning appointed, the maker appeared, furnished for flight, on a little promontory : he waved his pinions awhile, to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and, in an instant, dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water, and the prince drew him to land, half dead with terroure and vexation.



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### CHAP. XVII.

#### THE PRINCE ASSOCIATES WITH YOUNG MEN OF SPIRIT AND GAIETY.

RASSELAS rose next day, and resolved to begin his experiments upon life. "Youth," cried he, "is the time of gladness: I will join myself to the young men, whose only business is to gratify their desires, and whose time is all spent in a succession of enjoyments."

To such societies he was readily admitted, but a few days brought him back, weary and disgusted. Their mirth was without images; their laughter without motive; their pleasures were gross and sensual, in which the mind had no part; their conduct was, at once, wild and mean; they laughed at order and at law, but the frown of power dejected, and the eye of wisdom abashed them.

The prince soon concluded, that he should never be happy in a course of life, of which he was ashamed. He thought it unsuitable to a reasonable being to act without a plan, and to be sad or cheerful only by chance.

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"Happiness," said he, "must be something solid and permanent, without fear and without uncertainty."

But his young companions had gained so much of his regard by their frankness and courtesy, that he could not leave them, without warning and remonstrance. "My friends," said he, "I have seriously considered our manners and our prospects, and find that we have mistaken our own interest. The first years of man must make provision for the last. He that never thinks, never can be wise. Perpetual levity must end in ignorance; and intemperance, though it may fire the spirits for an hour, will make life short or miserable. Let us consider, that youth is of no long duration, and that, in maturer age, when the enchantments of fancy shall cease, and phantoms of delight dance no more about us, we shall have no comforts but the esteem of wise men, and the means of doing good. Let us, therefore, stop, while to stop is in our power: let us live as men who are sometime to grow old, and to whom it will be the most dreadful of all evils to count their past years by follies, and to be reminded of their former luxuriance of health, only by the maladies which riot has produced,"

They stared awhile, in silence, one upon another, and, at last, drove him

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away by a general chorus of continued laughter.

The consciousness that his sentiments were just, and his intentions kind, was scarcely sufficient to support him against the horror of derision. But he recovered his tranquillity, and pursued his search.

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### CHAP. XVIII.

#### THE PRINCE FINDS A WISE AND HAPPY MAN.

As he was one day walking in the street, he saw a spacious building, which all were, by the open doors, invited to enter : he followed the stream of people, and found it a hall or school of declamation, in which professors read lectures to their auditory. He fixed his eye upon a sage, raised above the rest, who discoursed, with great energy, on the government of the passions. His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He showed, with great strength of sentiment, and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher ; that when fancy, the parent of passion, usurps the dominion of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation and confusion ; that she betrays the fortresses of the intellect to rebels, and excites her children to sedition against reason, their lawful sovereign. He compared reason to the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform, and lasting ; and

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fancy to a meteor, of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion, and delusive in its direction.

He then communicated the various precepts given, from time to time, for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope; is no more emaciated by envy, inflamed by anger, emaseulated by tenderness, or depressed by grief; but walks on calmly through the tumults, or privacies of life, as the sun pursues alike his course through the calm or the stormy sky.

He enumerated many examples of heroes immovable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents, to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil. He exhorted his hearers to lay aside their prejudices, and arm themselves against the shafts of malice or misfortune, by invulnerable patience; concluding, that this state only was happiness, and that this happiness was in every one's power.

Rasselas listened to him, with the veneration due to the instructions of a superiour being, and, waiting for him at the door, humbly implored the liberty of visiting so great a master of true wisdom. The lecturer hesitated

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a moment, when Rasselas put a purse of gold into his hand, which he received with a mixture of joy and wonder.

"I have found," said the prince, at his return to Imlac, "a man who can teach all that is necessary to be known ; who, from the unshaken throne of rational fortitude, looks down on the scenes of life changing beneath him. He speaks, and attention watches his lips. He reasons, and conviction closes his periods. This man shall be my future guide : I will learn his doctrines, and imitate his life."

"Be not too hasty," said Imlac, "to trust, or to admire the teachers of morality : they discourse, like angels, but they live, like men."

Rasselas, who could not conceive, how any man could reason so forcibly, without feeling the cogency of his own arguments, paid his visit in a few days, and was denied admission. He had now learned the power of money, and made his way, by a piece of gold, to the inner apartment, where he found the philosopher, in a room half-darkened, with his eyes misty, and his face pale. "Sir," said he, "you are come at a time when all human friendship is useless ; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied. My daughter, my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the comforts of my

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age, died last night of a fever. My views, my purposes, my hopes are at an end : I am now a lonely being, disunited from society."

"Sir," said the prince, "mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised : we know that death is always near, and it should, therefore, always be expected."

"Young man," answered the philosopher, "you speak like one that has never felt the pangs of separation." "Have you then forgot the precepts," said Rasselas, "which you so powerfully enforced ? Has wisdom no strength to arm the heart against calamity ? Consider, that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same." "What comfort," said the mourner, "can truth and reason afford me ? of what effect are they now, but to tell me that my daughter will not be restored ? "

The prince, whose humanity would not suffer him to insult misery with reproof, went away, convinced of the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences.

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### CHAP. XXXII.

#### THEY ENTER THE PYRAMID.

PEKUAH descended to the tents, and the rest entered the pyramid: they passed through the galleries, surveyed the vaults of marble, and examined the chest, in which the body of the founder is supposed to have been repositied. They then sat down in one of the most spacious chambers, to rest awhile before they attempted to return.

"We have now," said Imlac, "gratified our minds with an exact view of the greatest work of man except the wall of China.

"Of the wall it is very easy to assign the motive. It secured a wealthy and timorous nation from the incursions of barbarians, whose unskilfulness in arts made it easier for them to supply their wants by rapine than by industry, and who, from time to time, poured in upon the habitations of peaceful commerce, as vultures descend upon domestick fowl. Their celerity and fierceness, made the wall necessary, and their ignorance made it efficacious.

"But, for the pyramids, no reason has ever been given adequate to the cost and labour



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of the work. 'The narrowness of the chambers proves that it could afford no retreat from enemies, and treasures might have been repositied, at far less expense, with equal security. It seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination, which preys incessantly upon life, and must be always appeased by some employment. Those who have already all that they can enjoy, must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use, till use is supplied, must begin to build for vanity, and extend his plan to the utmost power of human performance, that he may not be soon reduced to form another wish.

"I consider this mighty structure, as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king, whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life, by seeing thousands labouring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art, that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and drestest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty, with perpetual gratifications, survey the pyramids, and confess thy folly ! "

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### CHAP. XLV.

#### THEY DISCOURSE WITH AN OLD MAN.

THE evening was now far past, and they rose to return home. As they walked along the bank of the Nile, delighted with the beams of the moon quivering on the water, they saw, at a small distance, an old man, whom the prince had often heard in the assembly of the sages. "Yonder," said he, "is one whose years have calmed his passions, but not clouded his reason : let us close the disquisitions of the night, by inquiring, what are his sentiments of his own state, that we may know whether youth alone is to struggle with vexation, and whether any better hope remains for the latter part of life."

Here the sage approached and saluted them. They invited him to join their walk, and prattled awhile, as acquaintance that had unexpectedly met one another. The old man was cheerful and talkative, and the way seemed short in his company. He was pleased to find himself not disregarded, accompanied them to their house, and, at the prince's request, entered with them. They placed him in the seat of honour, and set wine and conserves before him.

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"Sir," said the princess, "an evening walk must give, to a man of learning, like you, pleasures which ignorance and youth can hardly conceive. You know the qualities and the causes of all that you behold, the laws by which the river flows, the periods in which the planets perform their revolutions. Every thing must supply you with contemplation, and renew the consciousness of your own dignity."

"Lady," answered he, "let the gay and the vigorous expect pleasure in their excursions; it is enough that age can obtain ease. To me, the world has lost its novelty: I look round, and see what I remember to have seen in happier days. I rest against a tree, and consider, that in the same shade I once disputed upon the annual overflow of the Nile, with a friend who is now silent in the grave. I cast my eyes upwards, fix them on the changing moon, and think, with pain, on the vicissitudes of life. I have ceased to take much delight in physical truth; for what have I to do with those things which I am soon to leave?"

"You may, at least, recreate yourself," said Imlac, "with the recollection of an honourable and useful life, and enjoy the praise which all agree to give you."

"Praise," said the sage, with a sigh, "is,

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to an old man, an empty sound. I have neither mother to be delighted with the reputation of her son, nor wife to partake the honours of her husband. I have outlived my friends and my rivals. Nothing is now of much importance; for I cannot extend my interest beyond myself. Youth is delighted with applause, because it is considered, as the earnest of some future good, and because the prospect of life is far extended; but to me, who am now declining to decrepitude, there is little to be feared from the malevolence of men, and yet less to be hoped from their affection or esteem. Something they may yet take away, but they can give me nothing. Riches would now be useless, and high employment would be pain. My retrospect of life recalls to my view many opportunities of good neglected, much time squandered upon trifles, and more lost in idleness and vacancy. I leave many great designs unattempted, and many great attempts unfinished. My mind is burdened with no heavy crime, and, therefore, I compose myself to tranquillity; endeavour to abstract my thoughts from hopes and cares, which, though reason knows them to be vain, still try to keep their old possession of the heart; expect, with serene humility, that hour which nature cannot long delay; and hope to possess, in a better state, that

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happiness, which here I could not find, and that virtue, which here I have not attained."

He rose and went away, leaving his audience not much elated with the hope of long life. The prince consoled himself with remarking, that it was not reasonable to be disappointed by this account; for age had never been considered as the season of felicity, and, if it was possible to be easy in decline and weakness, it was likely that the days of vigour and alacrity might be happy; that the noon of life might be bright, if the evening could be calm.

The princess suspected that age was querulous and malignant, and delighted to repress the expectations of those, who had newly entered the world. She had seen the possessors of estates look with envy on their heirs, and known many who enjoyed pleasure no longer than they could confine it to themselves.

Pekuah conjectured, that the man was older than he appeared, and was willing to impute his complaints to delirious dejection: or else supposed that he had been unfortunate, and was, therefore, discontented: "For nothing," said she, "is more common than to call our own condition, the condition of life."

Imlac, who had no desire to see them depressed, smiled at the comforts which they

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could so readily procure to themselves, and remembered, that, at the same age, he was equally confident of unmingled prosperity, and equally fertile of consolatory expedients. He forbore to force upon them unwelcome knowledge, which time itself would too soon impress. The princess and her lady retired ; the madness of the astronomer hung on their minds, and they desired Imlac to enter upon his office, and delay next morning, the rising of the sun.

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THE *Lives of the Poets* (which were, in fact, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*) are the best known, or, at any rate, the least neglected, of Johnson's prose works. The biographical part of literature was what he loved most and in his own *Lives* he writes with a *gusto* which is not always evident in his more formal compositions.

Wisely, he refrained from adopting any uniform plan of treatment. Thus, while Pope provokes a long and critical analysis, lesser writers receive a brief biographical notice. But in all the *Lives* fact and prejudice, criticism and anecdote are successfully interwoven. Of those whose *Lives* are quoted here, Addison was Johnson's prose, as Pope was his poetic, model; of Collins, Johnson writes with the indulgent sympathy of a friend; of *The Beggar's Opera*, he is, as a moralist, distrustful, but it is noteworthy

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that in the written word the "heavy stroke" of his verbal denunciation is absent.<sup>1</sup>

Of Shakespeare, Johnson writes with sane and splendid enthusiasm. One of his earliest critical works was his *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth* (1745), and though the *Proposals* for an edition of Shakespeare appeared in 1756, the work was not completed for publication until 1765. Johnson is no idolater, but his criticism of detail never obscured his vision of Shakespeare's universality.

"We must confess the faults of our favourite," he wrote to Dr. Burney, "to gain credit to our praise of his excellencies."

<sup>1</sup> "There is in it," he said, "such a *labefaction* of all principles, as may be injurious to morality."



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### *From* THE PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature ; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world ; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers ; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions : they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual : in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept ; and it may be said of Shakespeare,

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that from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the tenour of his dialogue ; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

It will not easily be imagined how much Shakespear excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authors. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation, that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied to every stage but that of Shakespear. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned, by diligent selection,

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out of common conversation and common occurrences.

Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady, and a rival into the fable; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other; to make them meet in rapture, and part in agony; to fill their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered; is the business of a modern dramatist. For this, probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions; and, as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet, who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet, perhaps, no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not

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say, with Pope, that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristical; but, perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakspeare has no heroes: his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: even where the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakspeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but, if it were possible, its effects would, probably, be such as he has assigned;

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and it may be said, that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.

This, therefore, is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life ; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

### MACBETH (Scene x)

THE arguments by which Lady Macbeth persuades her husband to commit the murder, afford a proof of Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature. She urges the excellence and dignity of courage, a glittering idea which has dazzled mankind from age to age, and animated sometimes the housebreaker, and sometimes the conqueror ; but this sophism Macbeth has for ever destroyed, by distinguishing true from false fortitude, in a line and a half ; of which it may almost be said, that they ought to bestow immortality on the author, though all his other productions had been lost :

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I dare do all that may become a man ;  
Who dares do more is none.

This topick, which has been always employed with too much success, is used in this scene, with peculiar propriety, to a soldier by a woman. Courage is the distinguishing virtue of a soldier, and the reproach of cowardice cannot be borne by any man from a woman, without great impatience.

She then urges the oaths by which he had bound himself to murder Duncan, another art of sophistry by which men have sometimes deluded their consciences, and persuaded themselves that what would be criminal in others is virtuous in them : this argument Shakespeare, whose plan obliged him to make Macbeth yield, has not confuted, though he might easily have shown that a former obligation could not be vacated by a latter.

### FALSTAFF

BUT Falstaff, unimitated, unimitable Falstaff, how shall I describe thee ! thou compound of sense and vice ; of sense which may be admired, but not esteemed ; of vice which may be despised, but hardly detested. Falstaff is a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt. He is a thief and a glutton, a coward

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and a boaster, always ready to cheat the weak, and prey upon the poor ; to terrify the timorous, and insult the defenceless. At once obsequious and malignant, he satirizes in their absence those whom he lives by flattering. He is familiar with the prince only as an agent of vice, but of this familiarity he is so proud, as not only to be supercilious and haughty with common men, but to think his interest of importance to the duke of Lancaster. Yet the man thus corrupt, thus despicable, makes himself necessary to the prince that despises him, by the most pleasing of all qualities, perpetual gaiety, by an unfailing power of exciting laughter, which is the more freely indulged, as his wit is not of the splendid or ambitious kind, but consists in easy scapes and sallies of levity, which make sport, but raise no envy. It must be observed, that he is stained with no enormous or sanguinary crimes, so that his licentiousness is not so offensive but that it may be borne for his mirth.

The moral to be drawn from this representation is, that no man is more dangerous than he that, with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please ; and that neither wit nor honesty ought to think themselves safe with such a companion, when they see Henry seduced by Falstaff.

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### KING HENRY V

THIS play has many scenes of high dignity, and many of easy merriment. The character of the king is well supported, except in his courtship, where he has neither the vivacity of Hal, nor the grandeur of Henry. The humour of Pistol is very happily continued; his character has, perhaps, been the model of all the bullies that have yet appeared on the English stage.

The lines given to the chorus have many admirers; but the truth is, that in them a little may be praised, and much must be forgiven: nor can it be easily discovered why the intelligence given by the chorus is more necessary in this play than in many others where it is omitted. The great defect of this play is the emptiness and narrowness of the last act, which a very little diligence might have easily avoided.



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*From THE LIVES OF THE POETS.*

### ADDISON

BEFORE the Tatler and Spectator, if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no masters of common life. No writers had yet undertaken to reform either the savageness of neglect, or the impertinence of civility ; to show when to speak, or to be silent ; how to refuse, or how to comply. We had many books to teach us our more important duties, and to settle opinions in philosophy or politicks ; but an Arbiter Elegantiarum, a judge of propriety, was yet wanting, who should survey the track of daily conversation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which tease the passer, though they do not wound him.

For this purpose nothing is so proper as the frequent publication of short papers, which we read not as study but amusement. If the subject be slight, the treatise, likewise, is short. The busy may find time, and the idle may find patience.

This mode of conveying cheap and easy knowledge began among us in the civil war, when it was much the interest of either party to raise and fix the prejudices of the people.

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At that time appeared Mercurius Aulicus, Mercurius Rusticus and Mercurius Civicus. It is said, that when any title grew popular, it was stolen by the antagonist, who, by this stratagem, conveyed his notions to those who would not have received him, had he not worn the appearance of a friend. The tumult of those unhappy days left scarcely any man leisure to treasure up occasional compositions ; and so much were they neglected, that a complete collection is nowhere to be found.

These Mercuries were succeeded by l'Estrange's Observator ; and that by Lesley's Rehearsal, and, perhaps, by others ; but hitherto nothing had been conveyed to the people, in this commodious manner, but controversy relating to the church or state ; of which they taught many to talk, whom they could not teach to judge.

It has been suggested that the Royal Society was instituted soon after the restoration, to divert the attention of the people from publick discontent. The Tatler and Spectator had the same tendency ; they were published at a time when two parties, loud, restless, and violent, each with plausible declarations, and each, perhaps, without any distinct termination of its views, were agitating the nation ; to minds heated with political contest they supplied cooler and more

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inoffensive reflections; and it is said by Addison, in a subsequent work, that they had a perceptible influence upon the conversation of that time, and taught the frolick and the gay to unite merriment with decency; an effect which they can never wholly lose, while they continue to be among the first books by which both sexes are initiated in the elegancies of knowledge.

The *Tatler* and *Spectator* adjusted, like *Casa*, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like *la Bruyère*, exhibited the characters and manners of the age. The personages introduced in these papers were not merely ideal; they were then known and conspicuous in various stations. Of the *Tatler* this is told by Steele in his last paper; and of the *Spectator* by Budgel, in the preface to *Theophrastus*, a book which Addison has recommended, and which he was suspected to have revised, if he did not write it. Of those portraits, which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished, and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known and partly forgotten.

But to say that they united the plans of two or three eminent writers, is to give them but a small part of their due praise; they superadded literature and criticism, and

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sometimes towered far above their predecessors ; and taught, with great justness of argument and dignity of language, the most important duties and sublime truths.

All these topics were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention.

### POPE

BUT in the most general applause discordant voices will always be heard. It has been objected, by some who wish to be numbered among the sons of learning, that Pope's version of Homer is not Homeric; that it exhibits no resemblance of the original and characteristic manner of the father of poetry, as it wants his awful simplicity, his artless grandeur, his unaffected majesty. This cannot be totally denied ; but it must be remembered that "*necessitas quod cogit defendit* ;" that may be lawfully done which cannot be forborne. Time and place will always enforce regard. In estimating this translation, consideration must be had of the nature of our language, the form of our metre, and, above all, of the change which two thousand years have made in the modes of life and the habits of thought. Virgil wrote in a language of the same general

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fabrick with that of Homer, in verses of the same measure, and in an age nearer to Homer's time by eighteen hundred years; yet he found, even then, the state of the world so much altered, and the demand for elegance so much increased; that mere nature would be endured no longer; and, perhaps, in the multitude of borrowed passages, very few can be shown which he has not embellished.

There is a time when nations, emerging from barbarity, and falling into regular subordination, gain leisure to grow wise, and feel the shame of ignorance and the craving pain of unsatisfied curiosity. To this hunger of the mind plain sense is grateful; that which fills the void removes uneasiness, and to be free from pain for awhile is pleasure; but repletion generates fastidiousness; a saturated intellect soon becomes luxurious, and knowledge finds no willing reception till it is recommended by artificial diction. Thus it will be found, in the progress of learning, that in all nations the first writers are simple, and that every age improves in elegance. One refinement always makes way for another; and what was expedient to Virgil, was necessary to Pope.

I suppose many readers of the English Iliad, when they have been touched with some unexpected beauty of the lighter kind,

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have tried to enjoy it in the original, where, alas ! it was not to be found. Homer, doubtless, owes to his translator many Ovidian graces not exactly suitable to his character ; but to have added can be no great crime, if nothing be taken away. Elegance is surely to be desired, if it be not gained at the expense of dignity. A hero would wish to be loved, as well as to be revered.

To a thousand cavils one answer is sufficient ; the purpose of a writer is to be read, and the criticism which would destroy the power of pleasing must be blown aside. Pope wrote for his own age and for his own nation : he knew that it was necessary to colour the images and point the sentiments of his author ; he, therefore, made him graceful, but lost him some of his sublimity.

### COLLINS

But man is not born for happiness. Collins, who, while he *studied to live*, felt no evil but poverty, no sooner *lived to study* than his life was assailed by more dreadful calamities, disease and insanity.

Having formerly written his character,<sup>1</sup> while, perhaps, it was yet more distinctly impressed upon my memory, I shall insert it here.

<sup>1</sup>In the *Poetical Calendar*, a collection of poems by Fawkes and Woty, in several volumes, 1783, &c.

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“ Mr. Collins was a man of extensive literature, and of vigorous faculties. He was acquainted not only with the learned tongues, but with the Italian, French, and Spanish languages. He had employed his mind chiefly upon works of fiction, and subjects of fancy ; and, by indulging some peculiar habits of thought, was eminently delighted with those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature, and to which the mind is reconciled only by a passive acquiescence in popular traditions. He loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters ; he delighted to rove through the meanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of elysian gardens.

“ This was, however, the character rather of his inclination than his genius ; the grandeur of wildness, and the novelty of extravagance, were always desired by him, but not always attained. Yet, as diligence is never wholly lost, if his efforts sometimes caused harshness and obscurity, they likewise produced, in happier moments, sublimity and splendour. This idea which he had formed of excellence, led him to oriental fictions and allegorical imagery, and, perhaps, while he was intent upon description, he did not sufficiently cultivate sentiment. His poems are the productions of a mind not deficient in fire, nor

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unfurnished with knowledge either of books or life, but somewhat obstructed in its progress by deviation in quest of mistaken beauties.

“His morals were pure, and his opinions pious ; in a long continuance of poverty, and long habits of dissipation, it cannot be expected that any character should be exactly uniform. There is a degree of want, by which the freedom of agency is almost destroyed ; and long association with fortuitous companions will, at last, relax the strictness of truth, and abate the fervour of sincerity. That this man, wise and virtuous as he was, passed always unentangled through the snares of life, it would be prejudice and temerity to affirm ; but it may be said that at least he preserved the source of action unpolluted, that his principles were never shaken, that his distinctions of right and wrong were never confounded, and that his faults had nothing of malignity or design, but proceeded from some unexpected pressure, or casual temptation.

“The latter part of his life cannot be remembered but with pity and sadness. He languished some years under that depression of mind which enchains the faculties without destroying them, and leaves reason the knowledge of right without the power of pursuing it. These clouds which he perceived gathering on his intellects, he endeavoured to disperse



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by travel, and passed into France ; but found himself constrained to yield to his malady, and returned. He was, for some time, confined in a house of lunaticks, and afterwards retired to the care of his sister in Chichester, where death, in 1756, came to his relief.

“After his return from France, the writer of this character paid him a visit at Islington, where he was waiting for his sister, whom he had directed to meet him : there was then nothing of disorder discernible in his mind by any but himself ; but he had withdrawn from study, and travelled with no other book than an English testament, such as children carry to the school : when his friend took it into his hand, out of curiosity, to see what companion a man of letters had chosen, ‘I have but one book,’ said Collins. ‘but that is the best.’ ”

Such was the fate of Collins, with whom I once delighted to converse, and whom I yet remember with tenderness.

### GAY

ALL the pain which he suffered from the neglect, or, as he, perhaps, termed it, the ingratitude of the court, may be supposed to have been driven away by the unexampled success of the Beggars’ Opera. This play,

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written in ridicule of the musical Italian drama, was first offered to Cibber and his brethren at Drury-lane, and rejected ; it being then carried to Rich, had the effect, as was ludicrously said, of making Gay *rich*, and Rich *gay*.

Of this lucky piece, as the reader cannot but wish to know the original and progress, I have inserted the relation which Spence has given in Pope's words.

"Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay, what an odd pretty sort of a thing a Newgate pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try at such a thing, for some time ; but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This was what gave rise to the Beggars' Opera. He began on it ; and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not much like the project. As he carried it on, he showed what he wrote to both of us, and we now and then gave a correction, or a word or two of advice ; but it was wholly of his own writing. When it was done, neither of us thought it would succeed. We showed it to Congreve ; who, after reading it over, said, it would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly. We were all, at the first night of it, in great uncertainty of the event ; till we were very much encouraged by overhearing the duke of Argyle, who sat in the next box to us, say,

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‘ It will do—it must do ! I see it in the eyes of them.’ This was a good while before the first act was over, and so gave us ease soon ; for that duke, besides his own good taste, has a particular knack, as any one now living, in discovering the taste of the publick. He was quite right in this, as usual ; the good-nature of the audience appeared stronger and stronger every act, and ended in a clamour of applause.”

Its reception is thus recorded in the notes to the *Dunciad*.

“ This piece was received with greater applause than was ever known. Besides being acted in London sixty-three days, without interruption, and renewed the next season with equal applause, it spread into all the great towns of England ; was played in many places to the thirtieth and fortieth time ; at Bath and Bristol fifty, &c. It made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, where it was performed twenty-four days successively. The ladies carried about with them the favourite songs of it in fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens. The fame of it was not confined to the author only. The person who acted Polly, till then obscure, became, all at once, the favourite of the town ; her pictures were engraved, and sold in great numbers ; her life written, books of letters and verses to her published, and pamphlets

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made even of her sayings and jests. Furthermore, it drove out of England, for that season, the Italian opera, which had carried all before it for ten years."

Of this performance, when it was printed, the reception was different, according to the different opinion of its readers. Swift commended it for the excellence of its morality, as a piece that "placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light;" but others, and among them Dr. Herring, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, censured it, as giving encouragement not only to vice, but to crimes, by making a highwayman the hero, and dismissing him, at last, unpunished. It has been even said, that, after the exhibition of the Beggars' Opera, the gangs of robbers were evidently multiplied.

Both these decisions are surely exaggerated. The play, like many others, was plainly written only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is, therefore, not likely to do good; nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil. Highwaymen and house-breakers seldom frequent the playhouse, or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for any one to imagine that he may rob with safety, because he sees Macheath reprimed upon the stage.

## THE TRAVELLER

“ALL travellers,” said Johnson, “generally mean to tell truth.” Himself an incorrigible city-dweller, he travelled with the object not so much of seeing unfamiliar “appearances of nature,” as of studying different “modes of life.” This view is developed in No. (98) of *The Idler*<sup>1</sup> and Johnson’s *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* may well be judged by his own dictum that “he that would travel for the entertainment of others, should remember that the great object of remark is human life.”

Johnson had desired to visit the Western Islands for longer than he could remember and was finally induced to make the journey by the prospect of the “gaiety of conversation and civility of manners” of James Boswell. The journey occupied about three months and each traveller gave the world a record of his impressions. Johnson, though duly impressed by such natural spectacles as the Buller of Buchan, was primarily interested

<sup>1</sup> See page 107.

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in the life and manners of the Highlanders, and when he came to Raasay, an island which had been in the Macleod family for four hundred years, his spirits rose. "This is truly the patriarchal life," he said to Boswell, "this is what we came to find."

The second series of extracts is from a posthumously published *Diary* of a journey which Johnson made with the Thrales in 1774. Much of the diary consists of very brief notes and Johnson evidently did not think it worth while to make a book of them. "Wales," he wrote to Boswell, "is so little different from England, that it offers nothing to the speculation of the traveller."

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### *From A JOURNEY TO THE WESTERN ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.*

#### ST. ANDREWS

ST. ANDREWS seems to be a place eminently adapted to study and education, being situated in a populous, yet a cheap country, and exposing the minds and manners of young men neither to the levity and dissoluteness of a capital city, nor to the gross luxury of a town of commerce, places naturally unpropitious to learning; in one, the desire of knowledge easily gives way to the love of pleasure, and in the other, is in danger of yielding to the love of money.

The students, however, are represented as, at this time, not exceeding a hundred. Perhaps it may be some obstruction to their increase that there is no episcopal chapel in the place. I saw no reason for imputing their paucity to the present professors; nor can the expense of an academical education be very reasonably objected. A student of the highest class may keep his annual session, or, as the English call it, his term, which lasts seven months, for about fifteen pounds, and one of lower rank for less than ten; in

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which, board, lodging, and instruction are all included.

The chief magistrate resident in the university, answering to our vicechancellor, and to the *rector magnificus* on the continent, had commonly the title of lord rector; but, being addressed only as Mr. rector, in an inaugural speech, by the present chancellor, he has fallen from his former dignity of style. Lordship was very liberally annexed by our ancestors to any station or character of dignity. They said, the lord general, and lord ambassadour; so we still say, my lord, to the judge upon the circuit, and yet retain in our liturgy, the lords of the council.

In walking among the ruins of religious buildings, we came to two vaults, over which had formerly stood the house of the sub-prior. One of the vaults was inhabited by an old woman, who claimed the right of abode there, as the widow of a man whose ancestors had possessed the same gloomy mansion for no less than four generations. The right, however it began, was considered as established by legal prescription, and the old woman lives undisturbed. She thinks, however, that she has a claim to something more than sufferance; for, as her husband's name was Bruce, she is allied to royalty, and told Mr. Boswell, that when there were persons of quality in the



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place, she was distinguished by some notice ; that, indeed, she is now neglected, but she spins a thread, has the company of her cat, and is troublesome to nobody.

Having now seen whatever this ancient city offered to our curiosity, we left it with good wishes, having reason to be highly pleased with the attention that was paid us. But whoever surveys the world must see many things that give him pain. The kindness of the professors did not contribute to abate the uneasy remembrance of an university declining, a college alienated, and a church profaned and hastening to the ground.

St. Andrews, indeed, has formerly suffered more atrocious ravages and more extensive destruction ; but recent evils affect with greater force. We were reconciled to the sight of archiepiscopal ruins. The distance of a calamity from the present time seems to preclude the mind from contact or sympathy. Events long past are barely known ; they are not considered. We read with as little emotion the violence of Knox and his followers, as the irruptions of Alaric and the Goths. Had the university been destroyed two centuries ago, we should not have regretted it ; but to see it pining in decay, and struggling for life, fills the mind with mournful images and ineffectual wishes.

As we knew sorrow and wishes to be vain,

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it was now our business to mind our way. The roads of Scotland afford little diversion to the traveller, who seldom sees himself either encountered or overtaken, and who has nothing to contemplate but grounds that have no visible boundaries, or are separated by walls of loose stone. From the bank of the Tweed to St. Andrews I had never seen a single tree, which I did not believe to have grown up far within the present century. Now and then about a gentleman's house stands a small plantation, which, in Scotch, is called a *policy*, but of these there are few, and those few all very young. The variety of sun and shade is here utterly unknown. There is no tree for either shelter or timber. The oak and the thorn is equally a stranger, and the whole country is extended in uniform nakedness, except that in the road between Kirkaldy and Cowpar, I passed for a few yards between two hedges. A tree might be a show in Scotland, as a horse in Venice. At St. Andrews Mr. Boswell found only one, and recommended it to my notice; I told him that it was rough and low, or looked as if I thought so. "This," said he, "is nothing to another a few miles off." I was still less delighted to hear that another tree was not to be seen nearer. "Nay," said a gentleman that stood by, "I know but of this and that tree in the county."

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### THE BULLER OF BUCHAN

UPON these rocks there was nothing that could long detain attention, and we soon turned our eyes to the Buller, or Bouilloir of Buchan, which no man can see with indifference, who has either sense of danger, or delight in rarity. It is a rock perpendicularly tubulated, united on one side with a high shore, and on the other rising steep to a great height above the main-sea. The top is open, from which may be seen a dark gulf of water which flows into the cavity, through a breach made in the lower part of the enclosing rock. It has the appearance of a vast well bordered with a wall. The edge of the Buller is not wide, and to those that walk round, appears very narrow. He that ventures to look downward sees, that if his foot should slip, he must fall from his dreadful elevation upon stones on one side, or into the water on the other. We, however, went round, and were glad when the circuit was completed.

When we came down to the sea, we saw some boats, and rowers, and resolved to explore the Buller, at the bottom. We entered the arch, which the water had made, and found ourselves in a place, which, though we could not think ourselves in danger, we could scarcely survey without some recoil of the mind. The

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basin, in which we floated, was nearly circular, perhaps, thirty yards in diameter. We were enclosed by a natural wall, rising steep on every side to a height which produced the idea of insurmountable confinement. The interception of all lateral light caused a dismal gloom. Round us was a perpendicular rock, above us the distant sky, and below an unknown profundity of water. If I had any malice against a walking spirit, instead of laying him in the Red sea, I would condemn him to reside in the Buller of Buchan.

### A HIGHLAND HUT

NEAR the way, by the waterside, we espied a cottage. This was the first Highland hut that I had seen ; and, as our business was with life and manners, we were willing to visit it. To enter a habitation without leave, seems to be not considered here as rudeness or intrusion. The old laws of hospitality still give this license to a stranger.

A hut is constructed with loose stones, ranged for the most part with some tendency to circularity. It must be placed where the wind cannot act upon it with violence, because it has no cement ; and where the water will run easily away, because it has no floor but the naked ground. The wall, which is commonly

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about six feet high, declines from the perpendicular a little inward. Such rafters as can be procured are then raised for a roof, and covered with heath, which makes a strong and warm thatch, kept from flying off by ropes of twisted heath, of which the ends, reaching from the centre of the thatch to the top of the wall, are held firm by the weight of a large stone. No light is admitted but at the entrance, and through a hole in the thatch, which gives vent to the smoke. This hole is not directly over the fire, lest the rain should extinguish it; and the smoke, therefore, naturally fills the place before it escapes. Such is the general structure of the houses, in which one of the nations of this opulent and powerful island has been hitherto content to live. Huts, however, are not more uniform than palaces; and this, which we were inspecting, was very far from one of the meanest, for it was divided into several apartments; and its inhabitants possessed such property as a pastoral poet might exalt into riches.

When we entered, we found an old woman boiling goat's flesh in a kettle. She spoke little English, but we had interpreters at hand, and she was willing enough to display her whole system of economy. She has five children, of which none are yet gone from her. The eldest, a boy of thirteen, and her husband,

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who is eighty years old, were at work in the wood. Her two next sons were gone to Inverness, to buy *meal*, by which oatmeal is always meant. Meal she considered as expensive food, and told us, that in spring, when the goats gave milk, the children could live without it. She is mistress of sixty goats, and I saw many kids in an enclosure at the end of her house. She had also some poultry. By the lake, we saw a potatoe-garden, and a small spot of ground, on which stood four shocks, containing each twelve sheaves of barley. She has all this from the labour of their own hands, and, for what is necessary to be bought, her kids and her chickens are sent to market.

With the true pastoral hospitality, she asked us to sit down and drink whisky. She is religious, and though the kirk is four miles off, probably eight English miles, she goes thither every Sunday. We gave her a shilling, and she begged snuff; for snuff is the luxury of a Highland cottage.

### ANOCH

EARLY in the afternoon we came to Anoch, a village in Glenmollison of three huts, one of which is distinguished by a chimney. Here we were to dine and lodge, and were conducted through the first room, that had the

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chimney, into another lighted by a small glass window. The landlord attended us with great civility, and told us what he could give us to eat and drink. I found some books on a shelf, among which were a volume or more of Prideaux's *Connexion*.

This I mentioned as something unexpected, and perceived that I did not please him. I praised the propriety of his language, and was answered that I need not wonder, for he had learned it by grammar.

By subsequent opportunities of observation, I found that my host's diction had nothing peculiar. Those Highlanders that can speak English, commonly speak it well, with few of the words, and little of the tone, by which a Scotchman is distinguished. Their language seems to have been learned in the army or the navy, or by some communication with those, who could give them good examples of accent and pronunciation. By their Lowland neighbours they would not willingly be taught; for they have long considered them as a mean and degenerate race. These prejudices are wearing fast away; but so much of them still remains, that, when I asked a very learned minister in the islands, which they considered as their most savage clans: "Those," said he, "that live next the Lowlands."

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As we came hither early in the day, we had time sufficient to survey the place. The house was built, like other huts, of loose stones; but the part in which we dined and slept, was lined with turf, and wattled with twigs, which kept the earth from falling. Near it was a garden of turnips, and a field of potatoes. It stands in a glen, or valley, pleasantly watered by a winding river. But this country, however it may delight the gazer, or amuse the naturalist, is of no great advantage to its owners. Our landlord told us of a gentleman who possesses lands, eighteen Scotch miles in length, and three in breadth; a space containing, at least, a hundred square English miles. He has raised his rents, to the danger of depopulating his farms, and he fells his timber, and, by exerting every art of augmentation, has obtained a yearly revenue of four hundred pounds, which, for a hundred square miles, is three halfpence an acre.

Some time after dinner we were surprised by the entrance of a young woman, not inelegant either in mien or dress, who asked us whether we would have tea. We found that she was the daughter of our host, and desired her to make it. Her conversation, like her appearance, was gentle and pleasing. We knew that the girls of the Highlands are all gentlewomen, and treated her with great



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respect, which she received as customary and due, and was neither elated by it, nor confused, but repaid my civilities without embarrassment, and told me how much I honoured her country, by coming to survey it.

She had been at Inverness to gain the common female qualifications, and had, like her father, the English pronunciation. I presented her with a book, which I happened to have about me, and should not be pleased to think that she forgets me.

In the evening the soldiers, whom we had passed on the road, came to spend at our inn the little money that we had given them. They had the true military impatience of coin in their pockets, and had marched at least six miles to find the first place where liquor could be bought. Having never been before in a place so wild and unfrequented, I was glad of their arrival, because I knew that we had made them friends ; and to gain still more of their goodwill, we went to them, where they were carousing in the barn, and added something to our former gift. All that we gave was not much, but it detained them in the barn, either merry or quarrelling, the whole night, and in the morning they went back to their work, with great indignation at the bad qualities of whisky.

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### GLENELG

WE left Auknasheals and the Macracs in the afternoon, and in the evening came to Ratiken, a high hill on which a road is cut, but so steep and narrow that it is very difficult. There is now a design of making another way round the bottom. Upon one of the precipices, my horse, weary with the steepness of the rise, staggered a little, and I called in haste to the Highlander to hold him. This was the only moment of my journey, in which I thought myself endangered.

Having surmounted the hill at last, we were told, that at Glenelg, on the seaside, we should come to a house of lime and slate and glass. This image of magnificence raised our expectation. At last we came to our inn, weary and peevish, and began to enquire for meat and beds.

Of the provisions the negative catalogue was very copious. Here was no meat, no milk, no bread, no eggs, no wine. We did not express much satisfaction. Here, however, we were to stay. Whisky we might have, and I believe at last they caught a fowl and killed it. We had some bread, and with that we prepared ourselves to be contented, when we had a very eminent proof of Highland hospitality. Along some miles of the way, in the evening, a gentleman's servant had kept us

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company on foot with very little notice on our part. He left us near Glenelg, and we thought on him no more till he came to us again, in about two hours, with a present from his master of rum and sugar. The man had mentioned his company, and the gentleman, whose name, I think, is Gordon, well knowing the penury of the place, had this attention to two men, whose names perhaps he had not heard, by whom his kindness was not likely to be ever repaid, and who could be recommended to him only by their necessities.

We were now to examine our lodging. Out of one of the beds, on which we were to repose, started up, at our entrance, a man black as a Cyclops from the forge. Other circumstances of no elegant recital, concurred to disgust us. We had been frightened by a lady at Edinburgh, with discouraging representations of Highland lodgings. Sleep, however, was necessary. Our Highlanders had at last found some hay, with which the inn could not supply them. I directed them to bring a bundle into the room, and slept upon it in my riding coat. Mr. Boswell, being more delicate, laid himself sheets with hay over and under him, and lay in linen like a gentleman.

### CORIATACHAN

I NEVER was in any house of the islands, where

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I did not find books in more languages than one, if I staid long enough to want them, except one from which the family was removed. Literature is not neglected by the higher rank of the Hebridians.

It need not, I suppose, be mentioned, that in countries so little frequented as the islands, there are no houses where travellers are entertained for money. He that wanders about these wilds, either procures recommendations to those whose habitations lie near his way, or, when night and weariness come upon him, takes the chance of general hospitality. If he finds only a cottage, he can expect little more than shelter; for the cottagers have little more for themselves: but if his good fortune brings him to the residence of a gentleman, he will be glad of a storm to prolong his stay. There is, however, one inn by the seaside at Sconsor, in Sky, where the post-office is kept.

At the tables, where a stranger is received, neither plenty nor delicacy is wanting. A tract of land so thinly inhabited must have much wild fowl; and I scarcely remember to have seen a dinner without them. The moor-game is every where to be had. That the sea abounds with fish, needs not to be told, for it supplies a great part of Europe. The isle of Sky has stags and roebucks, but no hares. They send very numerous droves of oxen

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yearly to England, and, therefore, cannot be supposed to want beef at home. Sheep and goats are in great numbers, and they have the common domestick fowls.

But as here is nothing to be bought, every family must kill its own meat, and roast part of it somewhat sooner than Apicius would prescribe. Each kind of flesh is undoubtedly excelled by the variety and emulation of English markets ; but that which is not best may be yet very far from bad, and he that shall complain of his fare in the Hebrides, has improved his delicacy more than his manhood.

Their fowls are not like those plumped for sale by the poulterers of London, but they are as good as other places commonly afford, except that the geese, by feeding in the sea, have universally a fishy rankness.

These geese seem to be of a middle race, between the wild and domestick kinds. They are so tame as to own a home, and so wild as sometimes to fly quite away.

Their native bread is made of oats, or barley. Of oatmeal they spread very thin cakes, coarse and hard, to which unaccustomed palates are not easily reconciled. The barley cakes are thicker and softer ; I began to eat them without unwillingness ; the blackness of their colour raises some dislike, but the taste is not

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disagreeable. In most houses there is wheat flour, with which we were sure to be treated, if we staid long enough to have it kneaded and baked. As neither yeast nor leaven are used among them, their bread of every kind is unfermented. They make only cakes, and never mould a loaf.

A man of the Hebrides, for of the women's diet I can give no account, as soon as he appears in the morning, swallows a glass of whisky; yet they are not a drunken race, at least I never was present at much intemperance; but no man is so abstemious as to refuse the morning dram, which they call a *skall*.

The word *whisky* signifies water, and is applied by way of eminence to *strong water*, or distilled liquor. The spirit drunk in the north is drawn from barley. I never tasted it, except once for experiment at the inn in Inverary, when I thought it preferable to any English malt brandy. It was strong but not pungent, and was free from the empyreumatick taste or smell. What was the process I had no opportunity of inquiring, nor do I wish to improve the art of making poison pleasant.

Not long after the dram, may be expected the breakfast, a meal in which the Scots, whether of the lowlands or mountains, <sup>few</sup> must be confessed to excel us. The tea and coffee are accompanied not only with butter, but

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with honey, conserves, and marmalades. If an epicure could remove by a wish, in quest of sensual gratifications, wherever he had supped he would breakfast in Scotland.

In the islands, however, they do what I found it not very easy to endure. They pollute the tea-table by plates piled with large slices of Cheshire cheese, which mingles its less grateful odours with the fragrance of the tea.

Where many questions are to be asked, some will be omitted. I forgot to inquire how they were supplied with so much exotic luxury. Perhaps the French may bring them wine for wool, and the Dutch give them tea and coffee at the fishing season, in exchange for fresh provision. Their trade is unconstrained ; they pay no customs, for there is no officer to demand them ; whatever, therefore, is made dear only by impost, is obtained here at an easy rate.

A dinner in the Western Islands differs very little from a dinner in England, except that, in the place of tarts, there are always set different preparations of milk. This part of their diet will admit some improvement. Though they have milk, and eggs, and sugar, few of them know how to compound them in a custard. Their gardens afford them no great variety, but they have always some

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vegetables on the table. Potatoes, at least, are never wanting, which, though they have not known them long, are now one of the principal parts of their food. They are not of the mealy, but the viscous kind.

Their more elaborate cookery, or made dishes, an Englishman, at the first taste, is not likely to approve, but the culinary compositions of every country, are often such as become grateful to other nations only by degrees; though I have read a French author, who, in the elation of his heart, says, that French cookery pleases all foreigners, but foreign cookery never satisfies a Frenchman.

Their suppers are like their dinners, various, and plentiful. The table is always covered with elegant linen. Their plates for common use are often of that kind of manufacture, which is called cream-coloured, or queen's ware. They use silver on all occasions where it is common in England, nor did I ever find a spoon of horn but in one house.

The knives are not often either very bright, or very sharp. They are, indeed, instruments of which the Highlanders have not been long acquainted with the general use. They were not regularly laid on the table, before the prohibition of arms, and the change of dress. Thirty years ago the Highlander wore his knife as a companion to his dirk or dagger,



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and when the company sat down to meat, the men, who had knives, cut the flesh into small pieces for the women, who with their fingers conveyed it to their mouths.

There was, perhaps, never any change of national manners so quick, so great, and so general, as that which has operated in the Highlands by the last conquest, and the subsequent laws. We came thither too late to see what we expected, a people of peculiar appearance, and a system of antiquated life. The clans retain little now of their original character ; their ferocity of temper is softened, their military ardour is extinguished, their dignity of independence is depressed, their contempt of government subdued, and their reverence for their chiefs abated. Of what they had before the late conquest of their country, there remain only their language and their poverty. Their language is attacked on every side. Schools are erected, in which English only is taught, and there were lately some who thought it reasonable to refuse them a version of the holy scriptures, that they might have no monument of their mother-tongue.

That their poverty is gradually abated, cannot be mentioned among the unpleasant consequences of subjection. They are now acquainted with money, and the possibility

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of gain will, by degrees, make them industrious. Such is the effect of the late regulations, that a longer journey than to the Highlands must be taken by him whose curiosity pants for savage virtues and barbarous grandeur.

### COL

WE were at Col under the protection of the young laird, without any of the distresses which Mr. Pennant, in a fit of simple credulity, seems to think almost worthy of an elegy by Ossian. Wherever we roved, we were pleased to see the reverence with which his subjects regarded him. He did not endeavour to dazzle them by any magnificence of dress; his only distinction was a feather in his bonnet; but as soon as he appeared, they forsook their work and clustered about him: he took them by the hand, and they seemed mutually delighted. He has the proper disposition of a chieftain, and seems desirous to continue the customs of his house. The bagpiper played regularly, when dinner was served, whose person and dress made a good appearance; and he brought no disgrace upon the family of Rankin, which has long supplied the lairds of Col with hereditary musick.

The tacksmen of Col seem to live with less dignity and convenience than those of Sky; where they had good houses, and tables, not

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only plentiful, but delicate. In Col only two houses pay the window tax ; for only two have six windows, which, I suppose, are the laird's and Mr. Macsweyn's.

The rents have, till within seven years, been paid in kind, but the tenants finding that cattle and corn varied in their price, desired for the future, to give their landlord money : which, not having yet arrived at the philosophy of commerce, they consider as being every year of the same value.

We were told of a particular mode of under-tenure. The tacksman admits some of his inferior neighbours to the cultivation of his grounds, on condition that, performing all the work, and giving a third part of the seed, they shall keep a certain number of cows, sheep, and goats, and reap a third part of the harvest. Thus by less than the tillage of two acres they pay the rent of one.

There are tenants below the rank of tacksmen, that have got smaller tenants under them ; for in every place, where money is not the general equivalent, there must be some whose labour is immediately paid by daily food.

A country that has no money, is by no means convenient for beggars, both because such countries are commonly poor, and because charity requires some trouble and some

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thought. A penny is easily given upon the first impulse of compassion, or impatience of importunity; but few will deliberately search their cupboards or their granaries to find out something to give. A penny is likewise easily spent; but victuals, if they are unprepared, require house-room, and fire, and utensils, which the beggar knows not where to find.

Yet beggars there sometimes are, who wander from island to island. We had, in our passage to Mull, the company of a woman and her child, who had exhausted the charity of Col. The arrival of a beggar on an island is accounted a sinistrous event. Every body considers that he shall have the less for what he gives away. Their alms, I believe, is generally oatmeal.

Near to Col is another island called Tireye, eminent for its fertility. Though it has but half the extent of Rum, it is so well peopled, that there have appeared, not long ago, nine hundred and fourteen at a funeral. The plenty of this island enticed beggars to it, who seemed so burdensome to the inhabitants, that a formal compact was drawn up, by which they obliged themselves to grant no more relief to casual wanderers, because they had among them an indigent woman of high birth, whom they considered as entitled to all that they could spare. I have read the stipulation,

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which was indited with juridical formality, but was never made valid by regular subscription.

If the inhabitants of Col have nothing to give, it is not that they are oppressed by their landlord : their leases seem to be very profitable. One farmer, who pays only seven pounds a year, has maintained seven daughters and three sons, of whom the eldest is educated at Aberdeen for the ministry ; and now, at every vacation, opens a school in Col.

Life is here, in some respects, improved beyond the condition of some other islands. In Sky, what is wanted can only be bought, as the arrival of some wandering pedler may afford an opportunity ; but in Col there is a standing shop, and in Mull there are two. A shop in the islands, as in other places of little frequentation, is a repository of every thing requisite for common use. Mr. Boswell's journal was filled, and he bought some paper in Col. To a man that ranges the streets of London, where he is tempted to contrive wants for the pleasure of supplying them, a shop affords no image worthy of attention ; but in an island it turns the balance of existence between good and evil. To live in perpetual want of little things, is a state not, indeed, of torture, but of constant vexation. I have in Sky had some difficulty to find ink for a letter ;

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and if a woman breaks her needle, the work is at a stop.

### INCHKENNETH

WE were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses ; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy, as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which had been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.

We came too late to visit monuments ; some care was necessary for ourselves. Whatever was in the island, sir Allan could demand, for the inhabitants were Macleans ; but having little, they could not give us much. He went to the headman of the island, whom fame, but

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fame delights in amplifying, represents as worth no less than fifty pounds. He was, perhaps, proud enough of his guests, but ill prepared for our entertainment ; however, he soon produced more provision than men not luxurious require. Our lodging was next to be provided. We found a barn well stocked with hay, and made our beds as soft as we could.

In the morning we rose and surveyed the place. The churches of the two convents are both standing, though unroofed. They were built of unhewn stone, but solid, and not inelegant. I brought away rude measures of the buildings, such as I cannot much trust myself, inaccurately taken, and obscurely noted. Mr. Pennant's delineations, which are doubtless exact, have made my unskilful description less necessary.

The episcopal church consists of two parts, separated by the belfry, and built at different times. The original church had, like others, the altar at one end, and the tower at the other ; but as it grew too small, another building of equal dimension was added, and the tower then was necessarily in the middle.

That these edifices are of different ages seems evident. The arch of the first church is Roman, being part of a circle ; that of the additional building is pointed, and therefore

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Gothick or Saracenic; the tower is firm, and wants only to be floored and covered.

Of the chambers or cells belonging to the monks, there are some walls remaining, but nothing approaching to a complete apartment.

The bottom of the church is so encumbered with mud and rubbish, that we could make no discoveries of curious inscriptions, and what there are have been already published. The place is said to be known where the black stones lie concealed, on which the old Highland chiefs, when they made contracts and alliances, used to take the oath, which was considered as more sacred than any other obligation, and which could not be violated without the blackest infamy. In those days of violence and rapine, it was of great importance to impress upon savage minds the sanctity of an oath, by some particular and extraordinary circumstances. They would not have recourse to the black stones, upon small or common occasions, and when they had established their faith by this tremendous sanction, inconstancy and treachery were no longer feared.

The chapel of the nunnery is now used by the inhabitants as a kind of general cowhouse, and the bottom is consequently too miry for examination. Some of the stones which covered the later abbesses have inscriptions, which might yet be read, if the chapel were



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cleansed. The roof of this, as of all the other buildings, is totally destroyed, not only because timber quickly decays when it is neglected, but because in an island utterly destitute of wood, it was wanted for use, and was consequently the first plunder of needy rapacity.

The chancel of the nuns' chapel is covered with an arch of stone, to which time has done no injury ; and a small apartment communicating with the choir, on the north side, like the chapter-house in cathedrals, roofed with stone in the same manner, is likewise entire.

In one of the churches was a marble altar, which the superstition of the inhabitants has destroyed. Their opinion was, that a fragment of this stone was a defence against shipwrecks, fire, and miscarriages. In one corner of the church the basin for holy water is yet unbroken.

The cemetery of the nunnery was, till very lately, regarded with such reverence, that only women were buried in it. These relicks of veneration always produce some mournful pleasure. I could have forgiven a great injury more easily than the violation of this imaginary sanctity.

South of the chapel stand the walls of a large room, which was probably the hall, or refectory of the nunnery. This apartment is capable of repair. Of the rest of the convent there are only fragments.

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Besides the two principal churches, there are, I think, five chapels yet standing, and three more remembered. There are also crosses, of which two bear the names of St. John and St. Matthew.

A large space of ground about these consecrated edifices is covered with grave-stones, few of which have any inscription. He that surveys it, attended by an insular antiquary, may be told where the kings of many nations are buried, and if he loves to sooth his imagination with the thoughts that naturally rise in places where the great and the powerful lie mingled with the dust, let him listen in submissive silence ; for if he asks any questions, his delight is at an end.

Iona has long enjoyed, without any very credible attestation, the honour of being reputed the cemetery of the Scottish kings. It is not unlikely, that, when the opinion of local sanctity was prevalent, the chieftains of the isles, and, perhaps, some of the Norwegian or Irish princes, were repositied in this venerable enclosure. But by whom the subterraneous vaults are peopled, is now utterly unknown. The graves are very numerous, and some of them undoubtedly contain the remains of men, who did not expect to be so soon forgotten.

Not far from this awful ground may be

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traced the garden of the monastery : the fish-ponds are yet discernible, and the aqueduct, which supplied them, is still in use.

There remains a broken building, which is called the Bishop's house, I know not by what authority. It was once the residence of some man above the common rank, for it has two stories and a chimney. We were shown a chimney at the other end, which was only a niche, without perforation ; but so much does antiquarian credulity, or patriotick vanity prevail, that it was not much more safe to trust the eye of our instructor than the memory.

There is in the island one house more, and only one, that has a chimney ; we entered it, and found it neither wanting repair nor inhabitants ; but to the farmers, who now possess it, the chimney is of no great value ; for their fire was made on the floor, in the middle of the room, and notwithstanding the dignity of their mansion, they rejoiced, like their neighbours, in the comforts of smoke.

It is observed, that ecclesiastical colleges are always in the most pleasant and fruitful places. While the world allowed the monks their choice, it is surely no dishonour that they chose well. This island is remarkably fruitful. The village near the churches is said to contain seventy families, which, at five in a family, is

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more than a hundred inhabitants to a mile. There are perhaps other villages ; yet both corn and cattle are annually exported.

But the fruitfulness of Iona is now its whole prosperity. The inhabitants are remarkably gross, and remarkably neglected : I know not if they are visited by any minister. The island, which was once the metropolis of learning and piety, has now no school for education, nor temple for worship, only two inhabitants that can speak English, and not one that can write or read.

The people are of the clan of Maclean ; and though sir Allan had not been in the place for many years, he was received with all the reverence due to their chieftain. One of them, being sharply reprehended by him, for not sending him some rum, declared after his departure, in Mr. Boswell's presence, that he had no design of disappointing him, "for," said he, "I would cut my bones for him ; and if he had sent his dog for it, he should have had it."

When we were to depart, our boat was left by the cbb at a great distance from the water, but no sooner did we wish it afloat, than the islanders gathered round it, and, by the union of many hands, pushed it down the beach ; every man who could contribute his help seemed to think himself happy in the

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opportunity of being, for a moment, useful to his chief.

We now left those illustrious ruins, by which Mr. Boswell was much affected, nor would I willingly be thought to have looked upon them without some emotion. Perhaps, in the revolutions of the world, Iona may be sometime again the instructress of the western regions.

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*From A DIARY OF A JOURNEY INTO NORTH  
WALES IN THE YEAR 1774*

### HAWKESTONE AND ILAM

WE saw Hawkestone, the scat of Sir Rowland Hill, and were conducted by Miss Hill over a large tract of rocks and woods ; a region abounding with striking scenes and terrific grandeur. We were always on the brink of a precipice, or at the foot of a lofty rock ; but the steepes were seldom naked : in many places, oaks of uncommon magnitude shot up from the crannies of stone ; and where there were no trees, there were underwoods and bushes.

Round the rocks is a narrow path cut upon the stone, which is very frequently hewn into steps ; but art has proceeded no further than to make the succession of wonders safely accessible. The whole circuit is somewhat laborious ; it is terminated by a grotto cut in the rock to a great extent, with many windings, and supported by pillars, not hewn into regularity, but such as imitate the spots of nature, by asperities and protuberances.

The place is without any dampness, and would afford an habitation not uncomfortable.

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There were from space to space seats cut out in the rock. Though it wants water, it excels Dovedale by the extent of its prospects, the awfulness of its shades, the horrors of its precipices, the verdure of its hollows, and the loftiness of its rocks : the ideas which it forces upon the mind are, the sublime, the dreadful, and the vast. Above is inaccessible altitude, below is horrible profundity. But it excels the garden of Ilam only in extent.

Ilam has grandeur, tempered with softness ; the walker congratulates his own arrival at the place, and is grieved to think he must ever leave it. As he looks up to the rocks, his thoughts are elevated ; as he turns his eyes on the vallies, he is composed and soothed.

He that mounts the precipices at Hawkestone, wonders how he came thither, and doubts how he shall return. His walk is an adventure, and his departure an escape. He has not the tranquillity, but the horrors, of solitude ; a kind of turbulent pleasure, between fright and admiration.

Ilam is the fit abode of pastoral virtue, and might properly diffuse its shades over Nymphs and Swains. Hawkestone can have no fitter inhabitants than giants of mighty bone and bold emprise ; men of lawless courage and heroic violence. Hawkestone should be described by Milton, and Ilam by Parnel.

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### CHESTER

IN the afternoon we came to West-Chester ; (my father went to the fair, when I had the small-pox). We walked round the walls, which are compleat, and contain one mile three quarters, and one hundred and one yards ; within them are many gardens : they are very high, and two may walk very commodiously side by side. On the inside is a rail. There are towers from space to space, not very frequent, and, I think, not all compleat.

We staid at Chester and saw the Cathedral, which is not of the first rank. The Castle. In one of the rooms the Assizes are held, and the refectory of the Old Abbey, of which part is a grammar school. The master seemed glad to see me. The cloister is very solemn ; over it are chambers in which the singing men live.

In one part of the street was a subterranean arch, very strongly built ; in another, what they called, I believe rightly, a Roman hypocaust.

Chester has many curiosities.

### BEAUMARIS CASTLE

THE Castle is a mighty pile ; the outward wall has fifteen round towers, besides square towers



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at the angles. There is then a void space between the wall and the Castle, which has an area enclosed with a wall, which again has towers, larger than those of the outer wall. The towers of the inner Castle are, I think, eight. There is likewise a Chapel entire, built upon an arch as I suppose, and beautifully arched with a stone roof, which is yet unbroken. The entrance into the Chapel is about eight or nine feet high, and was, I suppose, higher, when there was no rubbish in the area.

This Castle corresponds with all the representations of romancing narratives. Here is not wanting the private passage, the dark cavity, the deep dungeon, or the lofty tower. We did not discover the Well. This is the most compleat view that I have yet had of an old Castle. It had a moat.

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THE editor of the 1825 edition of Johnson's *Works* is "unable to dwell with pleasure" upon Johnson's character as a political writer. At the same time he pays the highest possible tribute to Johnson's controversial integrity: "He never wrote what he did not believe to be true."

Of the tracts from which quotations are given here, *Thoughts on the Late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands* (1771) was written in reply to a Letter of Junius and is a vehement protest against the suggestion of a war with Spain; *The Patriot*, addressed to the Electors of Great Britain in 1774, is a defence of the government's policy towards the Middlesex election and the American colonies; *Taxation no Tyranny* is "an Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress." Four editions of it were printed in the year 1775.

The last extract is of a different kind and illustrates the zest with which Johnson was prepared to throw himself into a controversy

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which, as even Boswell admits, lay quite out of his way. Friendship for Mr. Gwyn, whose design contained semi-circular arches, was, no doubt, the primary motive which impelled Johnson to write; Hawkins also points out that Mr. Mylne, the apostle of the elliptical arch, was "a native of North Britain."

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### *From* THOUGHTS ON THE FALKLAND'S ISLANDS

As war is the last of remedies, "*cuncta prius tentanda*," all lawful expedients must be used to avoid it. As war is the extremity of evil, it is, surely, the duty of those, whose station intrusts them with the care of nations, to avert it from their charge. There are diseases of animal nature, which nothing but amputation can remove; so there may, by the depravation of human passions, be sometimes a gangrene in collective life, for which fire and the sword are the necessary remedies; but in what can skill or caution be better shown, than preventing such dreadful operations, while there is yet room for gentler methods!

It is wonderful with what coolness and indifference the greater part of mankind see war commenced. Those that hear of it at a distance, or read of it in books, but have never presented its evils to their minds, consider it as little more than a splendid game, a proclamation, an army, a battle, and a triumph. Some, indeed, must perish in the most successful field, but they die upon the bed of honour, "resign their lives amidst the joys

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of conquest, and, filled with England's glory, smile in death."

The life of a modern soldier is ill represented by heroick fiction. War has means of destruction more formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thousands and ten thousands, that perished in our late contests with France and Spain, a very small part ever felt the stroke of an enemy ; the rest languished in tents and ships, amidst damps and putrefaction ; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless ; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men, made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery ; and were, at last, whelmed in pits, or heaved into the ocean, without notice and without remembrance. By incommodious encampments and unwholesome stations, where courage is useless, and enterprise impracticable, fleets are silently dispeopled, and armies sluggishly melted away.

Thus is a people gradually exhausted, for the most part, with little effect. The wars of civilized nations make very slow changes in the system of empire. The publick perceives scarcely any alteration, but an increase of debt ; and the few individuals who are benefited are not supposed to have the clearest right to their advantages. If he that shared the danger enjoyed the profit, and, after bleeding in the battle, grew rich by the victory, he

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might show his gains without envy. But, at the conclusion of a ten years' war, how are we recompensed for the death of multitudes, and the expense of millions, but by contemplating the sudden glories of paymasters and agents, contractors and commissaries, whose equipages shine like meteors, and whose palaces rise like exhalations !

These are the men who, without virtue, labour, or hazard, are growing rich, as their country is impoverished ; they rejoice, when obstinacy or ambition adds another year to slaughter and devastation ; and laugh, from their desks, at bravery and science, while they are adding figure to figure, and cipher to cipher, hoping for a new contract from a new armament, and computing the profits of a siege or tempest.

Those who suffer their minds to dwell on these considerations, will think it no great crime in the ministry, that they have not snatched, with eagerness, the first opportunity of rushing into the field, when they were able to obtain, by quiet negotiation, all the real good that victory could have brought us.

Of victory, indeed, every nation is confident before the sword is drawn ; and this mutual confidence produces that wantonness of bloodshed, that has so often desolated the world. But it is evident, that of contradictory opinions,

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one must be wrong ; and the history of mankind does not want examples, that may teach caution to the daring, and moderation to the proud.

Let us not think our laurels blasted by condescending to inquire, whether we might not possibly grow rather less than greater by attacking Spain. Whether we should have to contend with Spain alone, whatever has been promised by our patriots, may very reasonably be doubted. A war declared for the empty sound of an ancient title to a Magellanick rock, would raise the indignation of the earth against us. These encroachers on the waste of nature, says our ally the Russian, if they succeed in their first effort of usurpation, will make war upon us for a title to Kamtschatka. These universal settlers, says our ally the Dane, will, in a short time, settle upon Greenland, and a fleet will batter Copenhagen, till we are willing to confess, that it always was their own.

In a quarrel, like this, it is not possible that any power should favour us, and it is very likely that some would oppose us. The French, we are told, are otherwise employed : the contests between the king of France, and his own subjects, are sufficient to withhold him from supporting Spain. But who does not know that a foreign war has often put a stop

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to civil discords ? It withdraws the attention of the publick from domestick grievanees, and affords opportunities of dismissing the turbulent and restless to distant employments. The Spaniards have always an argument of irresistible persuasion : if France will not support them against England, they will strengthen England against France.

But let us indulge a dream of idle speculation, and suppose that we are to engage with Spain, and with Spain alone ; it is not even yet very certain that much advantage will be gained. Spain is not easily vulnerable ; her kingdom, by the loss or cession of many fragments of dominion, is become solid and compact. The Spaniards have, indeed, no fleet able to oppose us, but they will not endeavour actual opposition : they will shut themselves up in their own territories, and let us exhaust our seamen in a hopeless siege : they will give commissions to privateers of every nation, who will prey upon our merchants without possibility of reprisal. If they think their Plata fleet in danger, they will forbid it to set sail, and live awhile upon the credit of treasure which all Europe knows to be safe ; and which, if our obstinaey should continue till they can no longer be without it, will be conveyed to them with screey and security, by our natural enemies the



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French, or by the Dutch our natural allies.

But the whole continent of Spanish America will lie open to invasion; we shall have nothing to do but march into these wealthy regions, and make their present masters confess, that they were always ours by ancient right. We shall throw brass and iron out of our houses, and nothing but silver will be seen among us.

All this is very desirable, but it is not certain that it can be easily attained. Large tracts of America were added, by the last war, to the British dominions; but, if the faction credit their own Apollo, they were conquered in Germany. They, at best, are only the barren parts of the continent, the refuse of the earlier adventurers, which the French, who came last, had only as better than nothing.

Against the Spanish dominions we have never, hitherto, been able to do much. A few privateers have grown rich at their expense, but no scheme of conquest has yet been successful. They are defended, not by walls mounted with cannons, which by cannons may be battered, but by the storms of the deep, and the vapours of the land, by the flames of calenture and blasts of pestilence.

In the reign of Elizabeth, the favourite period of English greatness, no enterprises

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against America had any other consequence than that of extending English navigation. Here Cavendish perished, after all his hazards ; and here Drake and Hawkins, great as they were in knowledge and in fame, having promised honour to themselves, and dominion to the country, sunk by desperation and misery in dishonourable graves.

During the protectorship of Cromwell, a time of which the patriotick tribes still more ardently desire the return, the Spanish dominions were again attempted ; but here, and only here, the fortune of Cromwell made a pause. His forces were driven from Hispaniola ; his hopes of possessing the West Indies vanished ; and Jamaica was taken, only that the whole expedition might not grow ridiculous.

The attack of Carthagena is yet remembered, where the Spaniards, from the ramparts, saw their invaders destroyed by the hostility of the elements, poisoned by the air, and crippled by the dews ; where every hour swept away battalions ; and, in the three days that passed between the descent and re-embarkation, half an army perished.

In the last war the Havanna was taken ; at what expense is too well remembered. May my country be never cursed with such another conquest !

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### *From* THE PATRIOT

To improve the golden moment of opportunity, and catch the good that is within our reach, is the great art of life. Many wants are suffered, which might once have been supplied ; and much time is lost in regretting the time which had been lost before.

At the end of every seven years comes the saturnalian season, when the freemen of great Britain may please themselves with the choice of their representatives. This happy day has now arrived, somewhat sooner than it could be claimed.

To select and depute these, by whom laws are to be made, and taxes to be granted, is a high dignity, and an important trust ; and it is the business of every elector to consider, how this dignity may be well sustained, and this trust faithfully discharged.

It ought to be deeply impressed on the minds of all who have voices in this national deliberation, that no man can deserve a seat in parliament, who is not a patriot. No other man will protect our rights : no other man can merit our confidence.

A patriot is he whose publick conduct is

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regulated by one single motive, the love of his country ; who, as an agent in parliament, has, for himself, neither hope nor fear, neither kindness nor resentment, but refers every thing to the common interest.

That of five hundred men, such as this degenerate age affords, a majority can be found thus virtuously abstracted, who will affirm ? Yet there is no good in despondence : vigilance and activity often effect more than was expected. Let us take a patriot, where we can meet him ; and, that we may not flatter ourselves by false appearances, distinguish those marks which are certain, from those which may deceive ; for a man may have the external appearance of a patriot, without the constituent qualities ; as false coins have often lustre, though they want weight.

Some claim a place in the list of patriots, by an acrimonious and unremitting opposition to the court.

This mark is by no means infallible. Patriotism is not necessarily included in rebellion. A man may hate his king, yet not love his country. He that has been refused a reasonable, or unreasonable request, who thinks his merit underrated, and sees his influence declining, begins soon to talk of natural equality, the absurdity of "many

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made for one," the original compact, the foundation of authority, and the majesty of the people. As his political melancholy increases, he tells, and, perhaps, dreams, of the advances of the prerogative, and the dangers of arbitrary power ; yet his design, in all his declamation, is not to benefit his country, but to gratify his malice.

These, however, are the most honest of the opponents of government ; their patriotism is a species of disease ; and they feel some part of what they express. But the greater, far the greater number of those who rave and rail, and inquire and accuse, neither suspect nor fear, nor care for the publick ; but hope to force their way to riches, by virulence and invective, and are vehement and clamorous, *only that they may be sooner hired to be silent.*

A man sometimes starts up a patriot, only by disseminating discontent, and propagating reports of secret influence, of dangerous counsels, of violated rights, and encroaching usurpation.

This practice is no certain note of patriotism. To instigate the populace with rage beyond the provocation, is to suspend publick happiness, if not to destroy it. He is no lover of his country, that unnecessarily disturbs its peace. Few errors and few faults of government, can justify an appeal to the rabble ;

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who ought not to judge of what they cannot understand, and whose opinions are not propagated by reason, but caught by contagion.

The fallaciousness of this note of patriotism is particularly apparent, when the clamour continues after the evil is past. They who are still filling our ears with Mr. Wilkes, and the freeholders of Middlesex, lament a grievance that is now at an end. Mr. Wilkes may be chosen, if any will choose him, and the precedent of his exclusion makes not any honest, or any decent man, think himself in danger.

It may be doubted, whether the name of a patriot can be fairly given, as the reward of secret satire, or open outrage. To fill the newspapers with sly hints of corruption and intrigue, to circulate the Middlesex Journal, and London Packet, may, indeed, be zeal; but it may, likewise, be interest and malice. To offer a petition, not expected to be granted; to insult a king with a rude remonstrance, only because there is no punishment for legal insolence, is not courage, for there is no danger; nor patriotism, for it tends to the subversion of order, and lets wickedness loose upon the land, by destroying the reverence due to sovereign authority.

It is the quality of patriotism to be jealous and watchful, to observe all secret machinations, and to see publick dangers at a distance.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

The true lover of his country is ready to communicate his fears, and to sound the alarm, whenever he perceives the approach of mischief. But he sounds no alarm, when there is no enemy ; he never terrifies his countrymen till he is terrified himself. The patriotism, therefore, may be justly doubted of him, who professes to be disturbed by incredibilities ; who tells, that the last peace was obtained by bribing the princess of Wales ; that the king is grasping at arbitrary power ; and, that because the French, in the new conquests, enjoy their own laws, there is a design at court of abolishing, in England, the trial by juries.

Still less does the true patriot circulate opinions which he knows to be false. No man, who loves his country, fills the nation with clamorous complaints, that the protestant religion is in danger, because "popery is established in the extensive province of Quebec," a falsehood so open and shameless, that it can need no confutation among those who know that of which it is almost impossible for the most unenlightened zealot to be ignorant :

That Quebec is on the other side of the Atlantick, at too great a distance to do much good or harm to the European world :

That the inhabitants, being French, were

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always papists, who are certainly more dangerous as enemies than as subjects :

That though the province be wide, the people are few, probably not so many as may be found in one of the larger English counties :

That persecution is not more virtuous in a protestant than a papist ; and that, while we blame Lewis the fourteenth, for his dragoons and his galleys, we ought, when power comes into our hands, to use it with greater equity :

That when Canada, with its inhabitants, was yielded, the free enjoyment of their religion was stipulated ; a condition, of which king William, who was no propagator of popery, gave an example nearer home, at the surrender of Limerick :

That in an age, where every mouth is open for *liberty of conscience*, it is equitable to show some regard to the conscience of a papist, who may be supposed, like other men, to think himself safest in his own religion ; and that those, at least, who enjoy a toleration, ought not to deny it to our new subjects.

If liberty of conscience be a natural right, we have no power to withhold it ; if it be an indulgence, it may be allowed to papists, while it is not denied to other sects.

A patriot is necessarily and invariably a lover of the people. But even this mark may sometimes deceive us.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

The people is a very heterogeneous and confused mass of the wealthy and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the good and the bad. Before we confer on a man, who caresses the people, the title of patriot, we must examine to what part of the people he directs his notice. It is proverbially said, that he who dissembles his own character, may be known by that of his companions. If the candidate of patriotism endeavours to infuse right opinions into the higher ranks, and, by their influence, to regulate the lower ; if he consorts chiefly with the wise, the temperate, the regular, and the virtuous, his love of the people may be rational and honest. But if his first or principal application be to the indigent, who are always inflammable ; to the weak, who are naturally suspicious ; to the ignorant, who are easily misled ; and to the profligate, who have no hope but from mischief and confusion ; let his love of the people be no longer boasted. No man can reasonably be thought a lover of his country, for roasting an ox, or burning a boot, or attending the meeting at Milc-end, or registering his name in the lumber troop. He may, among the drunkards, be a hearty fellow, and, among sober handicraftsmen, a free-spoken gentleman ; but he must have some better distinction, before he is a patriot.

A patriot is always ready to countenance

## THE PAMPHLETEER

the just claims, and animate the reasonable hopes of the people; he reminds them, frequently, of their rights, and stimulates them to resent encroachments, and to multiply securities.

But all this may be done in appearance, without real patriotism. He that raises false hopes to serve a present purpose, only makes a way for disappointment and discontent. He who promises to endeavour, what he knows his endeavours unable to effect, means only to delude his followers by an empty clamour of ineffectual zeal.

A true patriot is no lavish promiser: he undertakes not to shorten parliaments; to repeal laws; or to change the mode of representation, transmitted by our ancestors; he knows that futurity is not in his power, and that all times are not alike favourable to change.

Much less does he make a vague and indefinite promise of obeying the mandates of his constituents. He knows the prejudices of faction, and the inconstancy of the multitude. He would first inquire, how the opinion of his constituents shall be taken. Popular instructions are, commonly, the work, not of the wise and steady, but the violent and rash; meetings held for directing representatives are seldom attended but by the idle and the dissolute;

### SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

and he is not without suspicion, that of his constituents, as of other numbers of men, the smaller part may often be the wiser.

He considers himself as deputed to promote the publick good, and to preserve his constituents, with the rest of his countrymen, not only from being hurt by others, but from hurting themselves.

## THE PAMPHLETEER

### *From* TAXATION NO TYRANNY

BUT hear, ye sons and daughters of liberty, the sounds which the winds are wafting from the western continent. The Americans are telling one another, what, if we may judge from their noisy triumph, they have but lately discovered, and what yet is a very important truth: "That they are entitled to life, liberty, and property; and that they have never ceded to any sovereign power whatever a right to dispose of either without their consent."

While this resolution stands alone, the Americans are free from singularity of opinion; their wit has not yet betrayed them to heresy. While they speak as the naked sons of nature, they claim but what is claimed by other men, and have withheld nothing but what all withhold. They are here upon firm ground, behind entrenchments which never can be forced.

Humanity is very uniform. The Americans have this resemblance to Europeans, that they do not always know when they are well. They soon quit the fortress, that could neither have been mined by sophistry, nor battered

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

by declamation. Their next resolution declares, that "Their ancestors, who first settled the colonies, were, at the time of their emigration from the mother-country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural-born subjects within the realm of England."

This, likewise, is true ; but when this is granted, their boast of original rights is at an end ; they are no longer in a state of nature. These lords of themselves, these kings of ME, these demigods of independence sink down to colonists, governed by a charter. If their ancestors were subjects, they acknowledged a sovereign ; if they had a right to English privileges, they were accountable to English laws ; and, what must grieve the lover of liberty to discover, had ceded to the king and parliament, whether the right or not, at least, the power of disposing " without their consent, of their lives, liberties, and properties." It, therefore, is required of them to prove, that the parliament ever ceded to them a dispensation from that obedience, which they owe as natural-born subjects, or any degree of independence or immunity, not enjoyed by other Englishmen.

They say, that by such emigration, they by no means forfeited, surrendered, or lost any of those rights ; but, that "they were, and

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their descendents now are, entitled to the exercise and enjoyment of all such of them, as their local and other circumstances enable them to exercise and enjoy."

That they who form a settlement by a lawful charter, having committed no crime, forfeit no privileges, will be readily confessed; but what they do not forfeit by any judicial sentence, they may lose by natural effects. As man can be but in one place, at once, he cannot have the advantages of multiplied residence. He that will enjoy the brightness of sunshine, must quit the coolness of the shade. He who goes voluntarily to America, cannot complain of losing what he leaves in Europe. He, perhaps, had a right to vote for a knight or burgess; by crossing the Atlantick, he has not nullified his right; but he has made its exertion no longer possible.<sup>1</sup> By his own choice he has left a country, where he had a vote and little property, for another, where he has great property, but no vote. But as this preference was deliberate and unconstrained, he is still "concerned in the government of himself;" he has reduced himself from a voter, to one of the innumerable multitude that have no vote. He has truly "ceded his right," but he still is governed by

<sup>1</sup> Of this reasoning I owe a part to a conversation with sir John Hawkins.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

his own consent ; because he has consented to throw his atom of interest into the general mass of the community. Of the consequences of his own act he has no cause to complain ; he has chosen, or intended to choose, the greater good ; he is represented, as himself desired, in the general representation.

But the privileges of an American scorn the limits of place ; they are part of himself, and cannot be lost by departure from his country ; they float in the air, or glide under the ocean :

“*Doris amara suam non intermisceat undam,*”

A planter, wherever he settles, is not only a freeman, but a legislator : “*ubi imperator, ibi Roma.*” “As the English colonists are not represented in the British parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several legislatures, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of the sovereign, in such manner as has been heretofore used and accustomed. We cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British parliament, as are, bona fide, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce—excluding every idea of taxation, internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects of America, without their consent.”

Their reason for this claim is, “that the

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foundation of English liberty, and of all government, is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council."

"They inherit," they say, "from their ancestors, the right which their ancestors possessed, of enjoying all the privileges of Englishmen." That they inherit the right of their ancestors is allowed; but they can inherit no more. Their ancestors left a country, where the representatives of the people were elected by men particularly qualified, and where those who wanted qualifications, or who did not use them, were bound by the decisions of men, whom they had not deputed.

The colonists are the descendants of men, who either had no vote in elections, or who voluntarily resigned them for something, in their opinion, of more estimation; they have, therefore, exactly what their ancestors left them, not a vote in making laws, or in constituting legislators, but the happiness of being protected by law, and the duty of obeying it.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

### CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PLANS OFFERED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE.

In three letters, to the printer of the *Gazetteer*.

#### LETTER I

Dec. 1, 1759.

SIR,

THE plans which have been offered by different architects, of different reputation and abilities, for the construction of the bridge intended to be built at Blackfriars, are, by the rejection of the greater part, now reduced to a small number; in which small number, three are supposed to be much superiour to the rest; so that only three architects are now properly competitors for the honour of this great employment; by two of whom are proposed semicircular, and by the other elliptical arches.

The question is, therefore, whether an elliptical or semicircular arch is to be preferred?

The first excellence of a bridge, built for commerce, over a large river, is strength; for a bridge which cannot stand, however beautiful, will boast its beauty but a little

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while ; the stronger arch is, therefore, to be preferred, and much more to be preferred, if, with greater strength, it has greater beauty.

Those who are acquainted with the mathematical principles of architecture, are not many ; and yet fewer are they who will, upon any single occasion, endure any laborious stretch of thought, or harass their minds with unaccustomed investigations. We shall, therefore, attempt to show the weakness of the elliptical arch, by arguments which appeal simply to common reason, and which will yet stand the test of geometrical examination.

All arches have a certain degree of weakness. No hollow building can be equally strong with a solid mass, of which every upper part presses perpendicularly upon the lower. Any weight laid upon the top of an arch, has a tendency to force that top into the vacuity below ; and the arch, thus loaded on the top, stands only because the stones that form it, being wider in the upper than in the lower parts, that part that fills a wider space cannot fall through a space less wide ; but the force which, laid upon a flat, would press directly downwards, is dispersed each way in a lateral direction, as the parts of a beam are pushed out to the right and left by a wedge driven between them. In proportion as the stones are wider at the top than at the bottom, they can less easily

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

be forced downwards, and, as their lateral surfaces tend more from the centre to each side, to so much more is the pressure directed laterally towards the piers, and so much less perpendicularly towards the vacuity.

Upon this plain principle the semicircular arch may be demonstrated to excel in strength the elliptical arch, which, approaching nearer to a straight line, must be constructed with stones whose diminution downwards is very little, and of which the pressure is almost perpendicular.

It has yet been sometimes asserted by hardy ignorance, that the elliptical arch is stronger than the semicircular; or in other terms, that any mass is more strongly supported the less it rests upon the supporters. If the elliptical arch be equally strong with the semicircular; that is, if an arch, by approaching to a straight line, loses none of its stability, it will follow, that all arcuation is useless, and that the bridge may at last, without any inconvenience, consist of stone laid in straight lines from pillar to pillar. But if a straight line will bear no weight, which is evident at the first view, it is plain, likewise, that an ellipsis will bear very little; and that, as the arch is more curved, its strength is increased.

Having thus evinced the superiour strength

## THE PAMPHLETEER

of the semicircular arch, we have sufficiently proved, that it ought to be preferred ; but to leave no objection unprevented, we think it proper, likewise, to observe, that the elliptical arch must always appear to want elevation and dignity ; and that if beauty be to be determined by suffrages, the elliptical arch will have little to boast, since the only bridge of that kind has now stood two hundred years without imitation.

## THE LETTER-WRITER

**M**ORE than one thousand of Johnson's letters have been preserved. Consequently the few printed here must be regarded only as a fragmentary selection. Two of them (the letter to Lord Chesterfield and the letter to James Macpherson) have acquired separate fame. The others have been selected to illustrate the variety of Johnson's personal relationships.

The medical detail in the letter to Miss Boothby is characteristic, and the recipe for the use of dried orange-peel reveals a secret which Boswell had been unable to probe.<sup>1</sup>

The letters to Mrs. Thrale afford the most abundant material for the study of Johnson's epistolary style, and in one of those quoted here there may be read Johnson's own view of "the great epistolick art." Another, which gives an account of the Gordon Riots, illustrates Johnson's manner of letter-writing when he really had something to say. When he first heard the news of Mrs. Thrale's

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, ii, 330.

## THE LETTER-WRITER

marriage to Gabriele Piozzi, Johnson wrote in haste and in anger: "If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness. . . ." But his sense of fairness and his sense of gratitude quickly led him to a more generous view and to the composition of the moving letter which is the last of those printed here.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF  
CHESTERFIELD.

February 7, 1755.

MY LORD,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietors of *The World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish, that I might boast myself "*le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;" that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending. But I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing, which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is

## THE LETTER-WRITER

well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward room, or was repulsed from your door ; during which time, I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect ; for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew acquainted with love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed, till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations, where no benefit has been received ; or to be unwilling that the publick should consider me as owing that to a patron, which providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work, thus far, with



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

so little obligation to any favourer of learning,  
I shall not be disappointed, though I should  
conclude it, if less be possible, with less : for  
I have been long wakened from that dream of  
hope, in which I once boasted myself with so  
much exultation, my lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,  
most obedient servant,

SAM : JOHNSON.

To MISS BOOTHBY.<sup>1</sup>

December, 31, 1755.

MY SWEET ANGEL,

I have read your book, I am afraid you will  
think without any great improvement ; whether  
you can read my notes I know not. You  
ought not to be offended ; I am perhaps as  
sincere as the writer. In all things that  
terminate here I shall be much guided by your  
influence, and should take or leave by your  
direction ; but I cannot receive my religion  
from any human hand. I desire however to  
be instructed, and am far from thinking myself  
perfect.

I beg you to return the book when you have  
looked into it. I should not have written  
what is in the margin, had I not had it from  
you, or had I not intended to shew it you.

<sup>1</sup> From the *Piozzi Letters* (1788).

## THE LETTER-WRITER

It affords me a new conviction, that in these books there is little new, except new forms of expression ; which may be sometimes taken, even by the writer, for new doctrines.

I sincerely hope that God, whom you so much desire to serve aright, will bless you, and restore you to health, if He sees it best. Surely no human understanding can pray for any thing temporal otherwise than conditionally. Dear Angel, do not forget me. My heart is full of tenderness.

It has pleased God to permit me to be much better ; which I believe will please you.

Give me leave, who have thought much on medicine, to propose to you an easy, and I think a very probable remedy for indigestion and lubricity of the bowels. Dr. Lawrence has told me your case. Take an ounce of dried orange-peel finely powdered, divide it into scruples, and take one scruple at a time in any manner ; the best way is perhaps to drink it in a glass of hot red port, or to eat it first and drink the wine after it. If you mix cinnamon or nutmeg with the powder, it were not worse ; but it will be more bulky, and so more troublesome. This is a medicine not disgusting, not costly, easily tried, and if not found useful, easily left off.

I would not have you offer it to the Doctor as mine. Physicians do not love intruders ;

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

yet do not take it without his leave. But do not be easily put off, for it is in my opinion very likely to help you, and not likely to do you harm ; do not take too much in haste ; a scruple once in three hours, or about five scruples a day, will be sufficient to begin, or less, if you find any aversion. I think using sugar with it might be bad ; if syrup, use old syrup of quinces : but even that I do not like. I should think better of conserve of sloes. Has the Doctor mentioned the bark ? in powder you could hardly take it ; perhaps you might take the infusion.

Do not think me troublesome, I am full of care. I love you and honour you ; and am very unwilling to lose you.

*A Dieu je vous recommande.*

I am, Madam,

Your, &c.,

SAM : JOHNSON.

TO MRS. JOHNSON.<sup>1</sup>

DEAR HONOURED MOTHER,

Neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all

<sup>1</sup> From Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Ed. Hill, I. 514).

## THE LETTER-WRITER

that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you his Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. Amen.

I am, dear, dear mother,  
Your dutiful son,

Jan. 20, 1759.

SAM : JOHNSON.

TO JAMES BOSWELL.<sup>1</sup>

DEAR SIR,

Why do you charge me with unkindness ? I have omitted nothing that could do you good, or give you pleasure, unless it be that I have forborne to tell you my opinion of your *Account of Corsica*. I believe my opinion, if you think well of my judgement, might have given you pleasure : but when it is considered how much vanity is excited by praise, I am not sure that it would have done you good. Your history is like other histories, but your Journal is in a very high degree curious and delightful. There is between the History and the Journal that difference which there will always be found between notions borrowed from without, and notions generated within. Your History was copied from books ; your Journal rose out of your own experience and

<sup>1</sup> From Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Ed. Hill, II. 70).

SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

observation. You express images which operated strongly upon yourself, and you have impressed them with great force upon your readers. I know not whether I could name any narrative by which curiosity is better excited, or better gratified.

I am glad that you are going to be married ; and as I wish you well in things of less importance, wish you well with proportionate ardour in this crisis of your life. What I can contribute to your happiness, I should be very unwilling to with-hold ; for I have always loved and valued you, and shall love and value you still more, as you become more regular and useful : effects which a happy marriage will hardly fail to produce.

I do not find that I am likely to come back very soon from this place. I shall, perhaps, stay a fortnight longer ; and a fortnight is a long time to a lover absent from his mistress. Would a fortnight ever have an end ?

I am, dear Sir,

Your most affectionate humble servant,

SAM : JOHNSON.

Brighthelmstone, Sept. 9, 1769.

## THE LETTER-WRITER

TO MR. FRANCIS BARBER, AT MRS. CLAPP'S,  
BISHOP-STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE.<sup>1</sup>

DEAR FRANCIS,

I am at last sat down to write to you, and should very much blame myself for having neglected you so long, if I did not impute that and many other failings to want of health. I hope not to be so long silent again. I am very well satisfied with your progress, if you can really perform the exercises which you are set; and I hope Mr. Ellis does not suffer you to impose on him, or on yourself.

Make my compliments to Mr. Ellis, and to Mrs. Clapp, and Mr. Smith.

Let me know what English books you read for your entertainment. You can never be wise unless you love reading.

Do not imagine that I shall forget or forsake you; for if, when I examine you, I find that you have not lost your time, you shall want no encouragement from

Yours affectionately,

SAM: JOHNSON.

London, Sept. 25, 1770.

MR. JAMES MACPIERSON.<sup>2</sup>

I received your foolish and impudent note.

<sup>1</sup> From Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Ed. Hill, II. 115).

<sup>2</sup> From the facsimile in the Catalogue of R. B. Adam.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

Whatever insult is offered me I will do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself the law shall do for me. I will not desist from detecting what I think a cheat from any fear of the menaces of a ruffian.

You want me to retract. What shall I retract? I thought your book an imposture from the beginning, I think it upon yet surer reasons an imposture still. For this opinion I give the publick my reasons which I here dare you to refute. But however I may despise you, I reverence truth and if you can prove the genuineness of the work I will confess it. Your rage I defy, your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable, and what I have heard of your morals, disposes me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you can prove. You may print this if you will.

SAM: JOHNSON.

Jan. 20, 1775.

TO MRS. THRALE.

Lichfield, October 27, 1777.

DEAR MADAM,

You talk of writing and writing, as if you had all the writing to yourself. If our correspondence were printed, I am sure posterity, for posterity is always the author's

## THE LETTER-WRITER

favourite, would say that I am a good writer too.—“*Anch’io sono pittore.*” To sit down so often with nothing to say; to say something so often, almost without consciousness of saying, and without any remembrance of having said, is a power of which I will not violate my modesty by boasting, but I do not believe that everybody has it.

Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection; some are wise and sententious; some strain their powers for efforts of gaiety; some write news, and some write secrets; but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gaiety, without news, and without a secret, is, doubtless, the great epistolick art.

In a man’s letters, you know, madam, his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast; whatever passes within him, is shown, undisguised, in its natural process; nothing is inverted, nothing distorted: you see systems in their elements; you discover actions in their motives.

Of this great truth, sounded by the knowing to the ignorant, and so echoed by the ignorant to the knowing, what evidence have you now before you? Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do not you see me reduced to my first principles? This is the pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

doubt and distrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought. The original idea is laid down in its simple purity, and all the supervenient conceptions are spread over it, "stratum super stratum," as they happen to be formed. These are the letters by which souls are united, and by which minds, naturally in unison, move each other, as they are moved themselves. I know, dearest lady, that in the perusal of this, such is the consanguinity of our intellects, you will be touched, as I am touched. I have, indeed, concealed nothing from you, nor do I expect ever to repent of having thus opened my heart. I am, &c.,

SAM : JOHNSON.

TO MRS. THRALE.

London, June 9, 1780.

DEAR MADAM,

To the question, Who was impressed with consternation ? it may, with great truth, be answered, that every body was impressed, for nobody was sure of his safety.

On Friday, the good protestants met in St. George's fields, at the summons of lord George Gordon, and marching to Westminster, insulted the lords and commons, who all bore it with great tameness. At night, the outrages

## THE LETTER-WRITER

began, by the demolition of the mass-house by Lincoln's inn.

An exact journal of a week's defiance of government, I cannot give you. On Monday, Mr. Strahan, who had been insulted, spoke to lord Mansfield, who had, I think, been insulted too, of the licentiousness of the populace; and his lordship treated it, as a very slight irregularity. On Tuesday night, they pulled down Fielding's house, and burnt his goods in the street. They had gutted, on Monday, sir George Saville's house, but the building was saved. On Tuesday evening, leaving Fielding's ruins, they went to Newgate, to demand their companions, who had been seized, demolishing the chapel. The keeper could not release them, but by the mayor's permission, which he went to ask; at his return, he found all the prisoners released, and Newgate in a blaze. They then went to Bloomsbury, and fastened upon lord Mansfield's house, which they pulled down; and as for his goods, they totally burnt them. They have since gone to Caen wood, but a guard was there before them. They plundered some papists, I think, and burnt a mass-house in Moorfields the same night.

On Wednesday, I walked with Dr. Scott, to look at Newgate, and found it in ruins, with the fire yet glowing. As I went by, the

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

protestants were plundering the Sessions house at the Old Bailey. There were not, I believe, a hundred ; but they did their work at leisure, in full security, without sentinels, without trepidation, as men lawfully employed in full day. Such is the cowardice of a commercial place. On Wednesday they broke open the Fleet, and the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, and Wood street Counter, and Clerkenwell Bridewell, and released all the prisoners.

At night, they set fire to the Fleet, and to the King's Bench, and I know not how many other places ; and one might see the glare of conflagration fill the sky from many parts. The sight was dreadful. Some people were threatened ; Mr. Strahan advised me to take care of myself. Such a time of terror you have been happy in not seeing.

The king said, in council, that the magistrates had not done their duty, but that he would do his own ; and a proclamation was published, directing us to keep our servants within doors, as the peace was now to be preserved by force. The soldiers were sent out to different parts, and the town is now at quiet.

What has happened at your house, you will know ; the harm is only a few butts of beer ; and I think you may be sure that the danger is over. There is a body of soldiers at St. Margaret's hill.

## THE LETTER-WRITER

Of Mr. Tyson I know nothing, nor can guess to what he can allude ; but I know that a young fellow of little more than seventy is naturally an unresisted conqueror of hearts.

Pray tell Mr. Thrale that I live here and have no fruit, and if he does not interpose, am not likely to have much ; but, I think, he might as well give me a little, as give all to the gardener.

Pray make my compliments to Queeney and Burney.

I am, &c.

SAM : JOHNSON.

TO MISS JANE LANGTON<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAREST MISS JENNY,

I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered ; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected ; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetick,

<sup>1</sup> From Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Ed. Hill. IV. 271).

SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your Bible.

I am, my dear, your most humble servant,

SAM : JOHNSON.

May 10, 1784.

TO MRS. PIOZZI

London, July 8, 1784.

DEAR MADAM,—What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me; I, therefore, breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world, for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness, I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle in England: you may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons; but

## THE LETTER-WRITER

every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy.

I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

When queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the archbishop of St. Andrew's, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremicable stream, that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness, proportioned to her danger and his own affection, pressed her to return. The queen went forward.—If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther.—The tears stand in my eyes.

I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes, for I am, with great affection, your, &c.

SAM : JOHNSON.

Any letters that come for me hither will be sent me.

## THE MAN OF RELIGION.

**T**HE volume of *Prayers and Meditations*, composed by Johnson and published from his manuscripts by the Reverend George Strahan in 1785, is one of the most intimate pieces of self-revelation in the English language. The burden of Johnson's prayer was the same always : *Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

On the first day of the year, on his birthday, on the anniversary of his wife's death, at the beginning of some new literary enterprise, and, above all, at Easter, Johnson sat down and endeavoured, in candour and humility, to set his spiritual house in order. Year after year he resolved to get up earlier in the morning and to be more methodical in his thoughts, his habits, his diet, his reading, his work and his worship.

But as he records his Easter meditations, the spirit of the diarist is combined with that of the devotee and we learn how he ate his hot-cross buns with Boswell, or gave five

## THE MAN OF RELIGION

shillings—privately—to the poor girl who came to the Sacrament in her bed-gown.

The prayer written on his last day at Streatham is a solemn thanksgiving for the “kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched,” and Mrs. Piozzi has herself paid a candid tribute to Johnson’s piety :

“Lowly towards God, and docile towards the church ; implicit in his belief towards the people appointed to preach it ; tender of the unhappy, and affectionate to the poor, let no one hastily condemn as proud, a character which may perhaps somewhat justly be censured as arrogant.”

The last extract given here is from Number 7 of the collection of *Sermons* left for publication by Dr. John Taylor and published in 1788. Boswell and other authorities unite in ascribing these to Johnson. There is external, as well as internal, evidence to support this ascription and in the seventh sermon (written on the text : *Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls*) we may certainly recognise both the hand and the mind of Samuel Johnson.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

*Prayer on the RAMBLER.* [1749-50]

ALMIGHTY God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly ; grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking, thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others ; grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Good Friday.*

April 20, 1764.

I HAVE made no reformation ; I have lived totally useless, more sensual in thought, and more addicted to wine and meat. Grant me, O God, to amend my life, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

I hope

To put my rooms in order.<sup>1</sup>

I fasted all day.

April 21, 1764, 3 in the morning.

My indolence, since my last reception of the Sacrament, has sunk into grosser sluggish-

Disorder I have found one great cause of idleness.

## THE MAN OF RELIGION

ness, and my dissipation spread into wilder negligence. My thoughts have been clouded with sensuality ; and, except that from the beginning of this year, I have in some measure forborn excess of strong drink, my appetites have predominated over my reason. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year ; and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression.

This is not the life to which heaven is promised.

I purpose to approach the altar again to-morrow. Grant, O Lord, that I may receive the Sacrament with such resolutions of a better life as may by thy grace be effectual, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

APRIL 21. I read the whole gospel of St. John.  
Then sat up till the 22nd.

My purpose is from this time,  
To reject or expel sensual images, and idle thoughts.

To provide some useful amusement for leisure time.

To avoid idleness.

To rise early.

To study a proper portion of every day.

To worship God diligently.

To read the Scriptures.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

To let no week pass without reading some part.  
To write down my observations.

I will renew my resolutions made at Tetty's death.

I perceive an insensibility and heaviness upon me. I am less than commonly oppressed with the sense of sin, and less affected with the shame of idleness. Yet I will not despair. I will pray to God for resolution, and will endeavour to strengthen my faith in Christ by commemorating his death.

I prayed for Tett.

*Easter Day.*

April 22, 1764.

HAVING, before I went to bed, composed the foregoing meditation, and the following prayer ; I tried to compose myself, but slept unquietly. I rose, took tea, and prayed for resolution and for perseverance. Thought on Tetty, dear poor Tetty, with my eyes full.

I went to church ; came in at the first of the Psalms, and endeavoured to attend the service, which I went through without perturbation. After sermon, I recommended Tetty in a prayer by herself ; and my father, mother, brother, and Bathurst, in another. I did it only once, so far as it might be lawful for me.

## THE MAN OF RELIGION

I then prayed for resolution and perseverance to amend my life. I received soon; the communicants were many. At the altar, it occurred to me that I ought to form some resolutions. I resolved, in the presence of God, but without a vow, to repel sinful thoughts, to study eight hours daily, and, I think, to go to church every Sunday, and read the Scriptures. I gave a shilling; and seeing a poor girl at the sacrament in a bedgown, gave her privately a crown, though I saw Hart's hymns in her hand. I prayed earnestly for amendment, and repeated my prayer at home. Dined with Miss W., went to prayers at church; went to ———, spent the evening not pleasantly. Avoided wine, and tempered a very few glasses with sherbet. Came home and prayed.

1778.

*Good Friday.*

April 17.

It has happened this week, as it never happened in Passion Week before, that I have never dined at home, and I have, therefore, neither practised abstinence nor peculiar devotion.

This morning before I went to bed I enlarged my prayers, by adding some Collects with

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

reference to the day. I rested moderately, and rose about nine, which is more early than is usual. I think I added something to my morning prayers. Boswell came in to go to church; we had tea, but I did not eat. Talk lost our time, and we came to church late, at the second lesson. My mind has been for some time feeble and impressible, and some trouble it gave me in the morning; but I went with some confidence and calmness through the prayers.

In my return from church, I was accosted by Edwards, an old fellow-collegian, who had not seen me since 1729. He knew me, and asked if I remembered one Edwards; I did not at first recollect the name, but gradually, as we walked along, recovered it, and told him a conversation that had passed at an alehouse between us. My purpose is to continue our acquaintance.

We sat till the time of worship in the afternoon, and then came again late, at the Psalms. Not easily, I think, hearing the sermon, or not being attentive, I fell asleep. When we came home we had tea, and I eat two buns, being somewhat uneasy with fasting, and not being alone. If I had not been observed, I should probably have fasted.

## THE MAN OF RELIGION

*On leaving Mr. Thrall's Family.*

October 6, 1782.

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may with humble and sincere thankfulness remember the comforts and conveniencies which I have enjoyed at this place, and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest and when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

O Lord, so far as, &c.—Thrale.

October 7.

I WAS called early. I packed up my bundles, and used the foregoing prayer, with my morning devotions somewhat, I think, enlarged. Being earlier than the family, I read St. Paul's farewell in the Acts, and then read fortuitously in the Gospels, which was my parting use of the library.

*From* SERMON No. VII.

The serenity and satisfaction at which we arrive by a firm and settled persuasion of the

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

fundamental articles of our religion, is very justly represented by the expression of finding rest for the soul. A mind restless and undetermined, continually fluctuating betwixt various opinions, always in pursuit of some better scheme of duties, and more eligible system of faith, eager to embrace every new doctrine, and adopt the notions of every pretender to extraordinary light, can never be sufficiently calm and unruffled, to attend to those duties which procure that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Suspense and uncertainty distract the soul, disturb its motions, and retard its operations : while we doubt in what manner to worship God, there is great danger lest we should neglect to worship him at all. A man, conscious of having long neglected to worship God, can scarcely place any confidence in his mercy, or hope, in the most pressing exigencies, for his protection. And how miserable is that man, who, on the bed of sickness, or in the hour of death, is without trust in the goodness of his Creator ! This state, dreadful as it appears, may be justly apprehended by those who spend their lives in roving from one new way to another, and are so far from asking for "the old paths," where is the "good way," that when they are shown it, they say, "We will not walk therein."

## THE MAN OF RELIGION

There is a much closer connexion between practice and speculation than is generally imagined. A man disquieted with scruples concerning any important article of religion, will, for the most part, find himself indifferent and cold, even to those duties which he practised before with the most active diligence and ardent satisfaction. Let him then ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and he shall find rest for his soul. His mind, once set at ease from perplexity, and perpetual agitation, will return with more vigour to the exercises of piety. An uniform perseverance in these holy practices, will produce a steady confidence in the Divine favour, and that confidence will complete his happiness. To which that we may all attain, God of his infinite mercy grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, adoration, and praise, now and ever ! Amen.



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

[This *Note* is intended merely as a rudimentary guide to the reader in search of available texts of Johnson; for detail the student must be referred to Courtney's *Bibliography*.]

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

An exhaustive *Bibliography of Johnson*, by W. P. Courtney and D. Nichol Smith, was published by the Clarendon Press in 1915 and reissued with illustrations in 1924.

### COLLECTED WORKS:

Many editions have been published from 1787 onwards, and are easily obtainable second-hand. The best is the Oxford edition of 1825.

### POETRY:

The first collected edition appeared in 1785. A handy reprint is *The Poems of Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray and Collins*, edited by Colonel T. Mothuen Ward (Routledge, 1905). *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is included in the Clarendon Press series (ed. E. J. Payne, 1876); also, with *London*, in Blackie's English Classics (ed. F. Ryland, 1901).

*Irene* has not been separately reprinted since 1781.

### ESSAYS:

Complete editions of *The Rambler* and *The Idler* can easily be bought second-hand. A selection

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### RASSELAS :

There are many modern editions. A fully annotated one is that by G. Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1887); a convenient reprint is that in the Carlton Classics (John Long, 1905) with an introduction by H. Bennett.

### CRITICISM :

Sir Walter Raleigh's *Johnson on Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1908) contains the Proposals, the Preface, and the Notes on the Plays, with an editorial introduction.

*The Lives of the Poets* were edited by G. Birkbeck Hill for the Clarendon Press in 1905. This is the standard edition. Cheap reprints are available in the World's Classics (ed. A. Waugh, 1906) and in Everyman's Library (ed. L. Archer-Hind, 1925).

### TRAVELS :

The best edition of *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* is that of R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1924). Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides* is included in this edition. The *Journey* is also obtainable separately in the Abbey Classics (Simpkin, 1925) and in the Pilgrim's Books (Allan, 1925). The *North Wales Diary* has not been separately reprinted, but is included in various editions of Boswell's *Life*.

### PAMPHLETS :

These have not been separately reprinted.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON : WRITER

### LETTERS :

The fullest edition is that of Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1892); the most useful selection is that made for the World's Classics by R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1925).

### DEVOTIONS :

Johnson's *Prayers and Meditations*, first published in 1785, has been many times reissued, but none of the modern editions appear to be in print. Second-hand copies are easily obtainable.

*The Sermons* are included in several editions of the *Collected Works*.

